

CHARITY
AND
OUR THREE VOWS
HILL



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CHARITY AND OUR THREE VOWS

Spiritual Conferences for Religious

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BY
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PREFACE

No matter what the nature of our profession or business, we all need to be reminded of our obligations; and information with a bearing on their fulfilment ought to be, and regularly is, most coveted by the wise and most appreciated. With all our faults, we honestly want to be right with God, we hunger and thirst after justice, and proficiency in virtue is far and away a more precious possession in our eyes than acquaintance with the secrets of science or the maxims of philosophy. Study of the ways and means to holiness has more alluring attractions for us than all the astronomy, physics and chemistry the world knows, or is ever destined to know. We are practical men of affairs, and we value wares at their true worth, preferring eternal goods to temporal, ready to sacrifice life and all its multiplied blessings for a seat in the kingdom of God. With this end in view the faithful on Sunday hear the word of God expounded from the pulpit, and religious communities at set intervals assemble in chapel for an exhortation or spiritual conference. This book contains a collection of such conferences, and its perusal, we trust, will prove interesting as well as profitable to devout readers. The topics it discusses are eminently practical and of pleasing variety, suited primarily to the needs of religious, and provocative of enthusiastic progress towards God in people of the world. God has friends and champions

in the world as well as in the cloister, and their discerning taste counts spiritual reading sweeter, more palatable and more nourishing for the mind than novels, romances and empty fables.

Briefly, the book contains thirty-six conferences. Faith and Hope are touched in the first two. With St. Paul for teacher, with his First Epistle to the Corinthians for text-book, Charity in all its ramifications is studied in eighteen of the thirty-six conferences. The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, her Purification, and the Epiphany of Our Lord are three other subjects; and these three mysteries were chosen for treatment because of the practical and important lessons they teach. Mortification, the Spirit of Lent, and Solid Virtue are three other headings. With St. Ignatius for guide, with his Spiritual Exercises for text-book, Meditation or Mental Prayer is subject-matter of three studies. Finally, seven of the Conferences deal with the Three Vows of Religion. With the hope, therefore, that the little work may prosper, and contribute in some small way to the advancement of God's glory in the world and the salvation of men's souls, the author commends it to the indulgent notice of God's friends. His whole purpose in composing the book was to increase love for God in himself and others, and awaken in all a genuine enthusiasm for growth towards holiness, the one pearl of rare worth on the earth, the treasure a wise man sells all to buy.

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Feast of the Assumption, 1925.

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BOOK I

I

FAITH AND COMMON-SENSE

"And this is the victory, which overcometh the world, our faith." 1 St. John, 5, 4.

WE religious are nothing, if not men and women of faith. We are the most absurd beings in the world, unless our standards of thought and conduct are altogether different from the standards held in honor outside of religion. It is common knowledge that life in the convent is as wide apart from life in the world as the palace of a king is from the hut of an Eskimo, and nobody is securer in this knowledge than we religious ourselves. We are able to compare, because we have made trial of both; we have tasted the sweetness of one, and we are determined for God's sake forever to taste the bitterness of the other. We had homes once, though we now live in barracks; we could once count friends, though our companions are now strangers; and our early lives were not without their intervals of pleasure and enjoyment, though pain and discomfort are by preference our present employment. When we left home, we knew well what awaited us, and if some uncertainty rested on our minds at the time, our few or many years in religion, with their ups and downs and disappointments, have amply served to remove it, and clear the thing of mystery. That summer morning long ago we said our vows at the foot of God's altar,

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we made the sacrifice with our eyes wide open; and the cross has never since left our shoulders, the cross shall never leave our shoulders, till our bodies are carried to the cemetery for burial. In the eyes of a greedy, proud and pleasure-loving world nothing is sillier than the three vows of religion, condemning their patrons to forfeiture of wealth, to forfeiture of legitimate pleasure, to forfeiture of glory, fame, and renown. Not long ago one government thought seriously of legislating against entrance into religion, adjudging men and women guilty of this folly as insane, and decreeing them candidates for the madhouse. An old law in England stripped religious of manhood as well as citizenship, reduced them to the low level of slaves and chattels in the kingdom, and denied them not only the suffrage, but all rights in property and at law. And modernists in our own Church, after solemnly sealing themselves to this higher kind of life, have not scrupled to dissuade others from taking the same step in long and learned invectives against the injustice, the stupidity, and the cruelty of the thing.

The world of common sense, then, is agreed to reckon us religious fools, and we are right proud of the distinction. Where ignorance is bliss, and that would seem to be the exact environment of our enemies, 'tis folly to be wise; and a fool with the wisdom of God is better than a philosopher with the hallucinations of a lunatic. Our folly is the folly of the cross, the kind St. Paul preached; and we can aspire no higher than Christ. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Gentiles foolishness." (1 Cor. 1, 23.)

Holiness is the summit of our aspirations, and holiness is somewhere described as love of God and love of man carried to a sublime extravagance. Everywhere in Scripture love of God and love of man go hand and hand together; and extravagance in a subdued and holy sense is the badge of whatever saints history knows. In the lexicon of the world the cross is folly, and folly is extravagance. Stout battle for the right when all the loud-mouthed advocates of evil are making pandemonium round, is already come to be reckoned imprudence. Sturdy reliance on God's promises, unwavering trust in the messages of God, plainly set down in Scripture, signed and sealed with the testimony of miracles, hope and faith are trifled with and made vain by our next door neighbors; and hope and faith are regarded by otherwise clever people as religious weakness and superstitious ignorance. Mortification of the flesh and restraint of its appetites, so much encouraged when Christianity was young, are now considered little better than suicide; and the virtues of the early Fathers of the Desert are reputed crimes by the votaries of modern enlightenment. The world of sin has a good word for every sort of extravagance, save only that of sanctity. It tolerates extravagant dress, it applauds extravagant ideas, it worships at the shrine of extravagant style; but let some man or woman make an unusual move in the direction of loving God, and of loving men for God's sake, and the world of sin entertains towards that man or woman no more friendly feeling than cold contempt or haughty disdain.

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Faith is the divine folly of the cross, common-sense is the diabolical wisdom of the world; and nowhere are they better contrasted than in the contemplation of the Two Standards as presented by St. Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises. There the banner of Lucifer is inscribed with the flaming words, Wealth, Glory, Pleasure; while the banner of Christ bears the golden words, Poverty, Humility, Pain. The world in the person of Lucifer cries out to its slaves, "Get money; carve yourself a niche in the temple of fame; crowd every minute with delight and gather the roses while you may, old time is still a-flying." Our Captain and Leader Christ exhorts us by word and example forever to forswear allegiance to wealth; to grow in humility by becoming more and more enamoured of contempt, self-abasement and humiliation at the hands of others; to welcome pain, fondle sorrow and exult in suffering. "Woe to you rich." St. Luke, 6, 24. "Go sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor." St. Matthew, 11, 21. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." St. Matthew, 11, 24. "The prayer of the humble shall pierce the clouds." Eccli. 35, 21. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmities." Isai. 53, 3. "He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins." Isai. 53, 5. These several texts are fair samples of the wisdom crowded into Scripture, Scripture is the word of God, and we religious cast our lot with God, quite content to abide by the consequences of our choice. Viewed in the light of what the world calls common-sense, these several texts are the limit of folly, without a grain of wisdom

to recommend them, the empty vaporings of a disordered imagination. Our captains of industry, our kings in the realms of finance,—and they are fair representatives of the world,—view poverty with suspicion, vote it the direst of evils, and even when entrenched behind their money-bags, dread it as an ever present menace. Our men of renown and vaulting ambition, our statesmen and politicians, despise humility as the crowning shame of paltry meanness and pusillanimity; they wade through seas of slaughter to reach high places, and cruelly trample under foot the hopes of weaker rivals. Our men and women of sin, familiar with the noise and glare of the great White Way, spend their days and nights in a mad endeavor to escape pain; and when pleasure is at an end, life loses its meaning, and they put a sudden period to the story with poison, knife or pistol. And the world is made up of misers, demagogues and libertines, the world enjoys a monopoly of what men call common-sense; and this being the case, the less you and I have to do with common-sense the better.

Common-sense ought to mean right reason, but by a strange perversion of ideas it has come to mean rationalistic reason, the kind that refuses to take faith and revelation into account. When rationalists repudiate faith and revelation, they repudiate supernatural truth, they virtually sweep from the universe of realities truths beyond unaided man's intellectual capacity, proclaim the human mind infinite or equal to all truth, and are the most irrational people in the world. When we entered religion, we took advice not

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from common-sense, but from faith. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." St. John, 15, 16. Had we consulted common-sense on that occasion, we might still be out there in the world, gazing at the stars, feeding on the air, and wasting golden hours, that are now put to good use in the love and service of God. And as long as we live in religion, we must never forget this fact. All our days must be built on faith for a foundation, and faith must clamp, rivet and bolt together all the deeds of all our days. Common-sense has operated to keep out of the convent many a soul belonging there, and God's vengeance awaits them. Common-sense operates to spoil the prospects of many a soul already entered into religion, and God's mercy is watching them with eyes of pity. Your common-sense religious is a zebra, half mule and half horse, with a wealth of stripes; and he were better a humble donkey, a patient mule, or an honest horse. He has small or no taste for the folly of the cross, he steers an easy course between convenience and duty, he tries to keep on good terms with God and Mammon, he loves God with his whole heart in such a way that creatures can on occasions claim its use and have their claims allowed. He could, if so minded, advertise us ordinary religious of mistakes we daily make, mistakes his fund of common-sense saves him. We encourage remorse when we go wrong, and that is unnecessary pain. We cultivate honesty in our dealings with others, and that is not politic. We fight against nature, and that is to censure God. We esteem humility, welcome obscurity, rejoice when we are

forgotten; and our right place is the theatric glare of public notice. We parade our simplicity, make fools of ourselves with and without permission; and conduct of the kind is a sure passport to oblivion. We live in the present, without laying plans for the morrow. We work when we could be idle. We love others, to promote their happiness; and we get their contempt for our pains. We imitate the Master in patient endurance of wrongs, and often have Pilate for judge. We thought the Master of Novices knew what he was talking about, when he preached the loveliness of contempt and the treasure resident in scorn. We took Rodriguez and the others seriously, when they talked of life in religion as a species of crucifixion and a descent into a living tomb.

If this common-sense be wisdom, we prefer not to be wise. In spite of our informants' clamors, we made no mistake. We cannot stumble when we follow Christ. It is better to be wrong with Christ, than right with the devil; to be a fool in the school of faith, than a philosopher in the university of common-sense. We walk the way right reason points out to us, and rationalistic reason has no favor in our eyes. Right reason is capable of longer reaches than rationalistic reason. Right reason never tires, and carries its owner from this world to the next, beyond the truths of chemistry and physics to the mysteries of the Bible, beyond the regions of natural knowledge and science to the realms of revelation and faith. We derive no worry from the muttering of common-sense prophets, mere tadpoles, that wiggle their tails and think to upset the equilib-

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rium of the world. We are Free Masons of God. His Holy Spirit has whispered us the secret of sanctity, the key to unlock life's mysteries, the lesson a silly world is too lazy or too dull to understand. "We must be born again of water and the Holy Ghost." St. John, 3, 5. We have a law, and according to that law we must die. "And this is the victory, which overcometh the world, our faith." I St. John, 5, 4. Take this picture from the Life of St. Francis of Assisi by Jørgensen. The author is describing the hardships that overtook Francis and his first disciples during the early days of their apostolate, "when discontent and despair were sometimes on the point of overcoming them in their shed at Rivo Torto. On dark and rainy days, when the water drove in through the leaky roof of the building, and the earth was black, and miry, and cold for the bare feet to tread upon, and they sat there in their coarse, ragged gowns, seven or eight in number, and had got nothing to eat all day, and did not know if the Brothers who had gone out to beg would bring anything home, and there was no fire to warm them, and no books to read. . . . In those days of rain, in those dark, cold hours, during the short, but raw and uncomfortable winter of Umbria, did it not perforce occur to one or another of them that it was all foolishness, and that the best thing to do was to turn back to the city, to the city where one had once owned house and garden, money and goods, which foolishly had been cast aside and given to the poor? There must surely have been some such moments, when more than one of the Brothers felt the spirit of penance weaken. And

yet we hear of only one falling away among the first disciples, John of Capella. All the others held fast and persevered, even if they often had to eat roots instead of bread. They persevered and they conquered."

II

HOPE AND HAPPINESS

“Blessed is the man that hopeth in the Lord.” Psalms, 33, 9.

HOPE is an emotion of the soul reaching out to some distant good, not yet in possession, but possible with mighty striving of attainment. Centuries ago old Aristotle wrote down the soul's emotions as nine, and nobody has since added to or subtracted from the list. They are, desire, delight, hope and despair; abhorrence, displeasure, dread and courage, and anger. The first four are manifestations of love, and invariably turn on good; the next four are manifestations of hate, and invariably turn on evil; the ninth or anger is a mixture of several different emotions. Desire has play when the good thing we want is absent; delight, when the good is present; hope, when it is absent, and hard to attain; despair, when it is absent and impossible to attain. Aversion is in order when the evil we anticipate is absent; displeasure, when the evil is present; dread, when it is absent and hard to avoid; courage, when it is absent and easy to avoid. Anger is made up of desire, displeasure and hope. Dismissing the others, we want to study at our leisure the melancholy emotion of hope. Hope is native to the human heart, it lives of our life, it is the badge of our present condition, and as unavoidable as the air we

breathe. It is a budding joy denied the angels, it is a sweet sorrow denied everything less than man. Hope has no place in Heaven, because it is a mixture of joy and sadness; and Heaven's happiness is unmixed delight. It has no place in hell, because despair is the inheritance of the damned, they are strangers to comfort, and hope would be some alleviation of their pains. Hope follows souls that die with lesser sins uncanceled, because purgatory is a middle house of suffering, the vestibule to glory. Here on earth hope is the drop of honey a kind Father mercifully slips into every cup of bitterness He proffers the lips of His children, and hope's proper home is this present life.

And hope is at best cold comfort. Hope is not all happiness. Even when sure of fulfillment, it soothes without destroying pain. It has patience for constant attendant; and patience is nothing, if not suffering. Patience enables a man to bear his burden without murmur, it lifts no weight from his shoulder. Hope is therefore coexistent with pain, and was meant from the first for a medicine to want. It turns on some absent good, not yet in possession, but possible with mighty striving of attainment. Hope is what enables the sick to see past the uneasy period of fever, and watch with desire the slow approach of health. It is what helps the impatient lover to win through tedious years of courtship the object of his heart's affections. With coveted wealth or fame in the distance, it keeps the artist's tired hand to his brush, it ties the thrifty merchant to his desk. Hope flooded the darkness of the catacombs with light, it sweetened the scanty fare

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of the hermits, it bowed the martyr's head to the executioner's axe. And today it holds saints the world over to stern duty. It makes selfish men hate self, it induces tender maidens to trample under foot every inferior instinct, and lead lives that are miracles of folly in the eyes of a brutish world. Hope can effect wonders in the natural order. In the supernatural order it is an energy that surpasses understanding. Supernatural hope turns on God, and it raises human endeavor to an almost even level with God's infinite capacity. Like faith and charity it is a habit let into the soul with sanctifying grace, and it is the motive power of acts that stir a sensation of pleasure in the answering heart of God.

Hope, we saw, is an emotion of the soul reaching out to some distant good, not yet in possession, but possible with mighty striving of attainment. Our wills are as wide as our mind; our hearts wander farther than our eyes. We can wish whatever we can know; and, because our minds are acquainted with what philosophers call complete happiness, our wills can desire it; and, because complete happiness is impossible on earth, its enjoyment is beyond our reach as long as we live, delight is out of the question, and hope is the one attitude at our disposal. Complete happiness is Heaven, it is what old Boëthius describes as the enduring possession of every good, and it contains two indispensable elements, a heaped up measure of good and unending duration. It is God as possessed by the elect in Heaven, because God alone is a heaped up measure of good, and a blessed eternity is the lot of

the saints. With God their own, no joy is absent from their hearts, and their happiness knows no loss, no diminution, no end. This complete happiness is a stranger on the earth. Search the four corners of the world, and you will not discover its hiding place. To find it, we must first die, and seek it in that other and better world beyond the grave.

Wealth is not complete happiness, nor fame, nor pleasure, nor wisdom, nor virtue itself. Money is no heaped up measure of good, and it parts company with its owner when he dies, sometimes sooner. Millionaires, as a rule, never enjoy fame. They are known only to be despised, their very relatives hate them, and visitors are searched for bombs and other weapons of murder, when admitted to their presence. They never enjoy pleasure of mind or pleasure of body. They are too much engrossed with business to waste time on trifles of the kind, they have no taste for leisure, and they work harder by day and by night than the humblest clerk in their employ. Fame in the same way is no heaped up measure of good, it is no better than money in this respect, and it is the most uncertain and unstable of possessions, because dependent on the whims of the mob, and the shifting air of popular favor. It takes a man's mind away from study, it hardly leaves him time for a night at the theatre, and it robs him of opportunity to enjoy his meals with content. Pleasure is incompatible with wealth, and fame, and wisdom, and virtue. It eats up colossal fortunes in a generation, it unfits body and mind for work, its slaves are outcasts of society, it dulls the mind and the senses, it

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gets men ready for the devouring fires of hell. Even wisdom is unsatisfying, and saints know only too well how many wants virtue leaves unfulfilled. Millionaires have become beggars in a night. Pierpont Morgan died of starvation because the muscles of his throat refused to work; Belisarius, the greatest general of the Roman Empire, finished by begging from door to door in the street; Cæsar was stabbed to death when master of the world; Napoleon, after circling the earth with victory, wept out a lonesome existence on an empty island. Our asylums for the insane are crowded with devotees of pleasure, whose sinful excesses condemned them to tarry here a while like beasts in a cage, and then in many cases pass to the eternal torments of hell.

Therefore complete happiness is not resident in wealth, or fame, or pleasure, or wisdom, or virtue; and, if this present life contains any higher good, any more precious possession than the goods just enumerated, we are not aware of its whereabouts. Therefore whatever man seeks contentment in this present life is doomed to disappointment. And yet we cannot shake off this longing for complete happiness. It is bone of our bone, life of our life, and as close to us as our shadow. It is the one craving at the bottom of all human desires, and no object within our present experience can satisfy the craving. Happiness is last thing in the series of wish-factors; and God alone is large enough when possessed to leave no room for further desire. Men cannot in reason want anything beyond God, men can-

not in reason rest in the enjoyment of anything this side of God.

And all the philosophy of Christ, as an ethical teacher, centres in His choice of happiness for motive to urge men to keep His law and His commandments. Happiness is the word with which the Lord Christ opened His sublime sermon on the mount. The beatitudes are eight steps in the ladder to God, and Christ knew best with what word to preface them. *Beati*, He said, *Blessed*, *Happy*, are the poor in spirit, and so on through the catalogue. He aimed in all His movements at spreading the kingdom of virtue in men's hearts. And the happiness born of virtue was the most tremendous motive at His command. He knew in His infinite wisdom that other rewards would in the last resort fail of effect, that they would prove only partial incentives. He knew that wealth, with all its attractiveness for some, would act as a deterrent on others, that fame would appeal to the instincts of a very limited circle. But happiness is a universal good, it is at the root of all the world's wishes. And with Boëthius, complete happiness is the enduring possession of every good, a heaped up measure of good and unending duration. These two elements are wanting in all the varied joys of earth. Mundane happiness has inseparably linked with itself a two-fold curse. While it fills one corner of a man's heart with pleasure, it fills another with pain. Its near departure haunts its possessor like a spectre. Partial pain and possible loss are ingredients of all the happiness this earth knows,

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and no amount of reasoning or care can quite eradicate them. Complete happiness is therefore an unending round of joy, in which no legitimate craving goes unfulfilled, in which no illegitimate craving has existence. This is perfect bliss. Philosophers besides recognize an inferior sort of blessedness, and for clearness' sake they call it imperfect bliss, incomplete happiness. It is the only sort this present life affords, and consists in a close union with our last end by the establishment of moral rectitude in our actions. It is virtue, it is peace of conscience, it is holiness, it is the inheritance of the saints, their hundred-fold in this life. It is the initial step in our progress towards complete happiness or perfect bliss; and, while haunted with the fear of loss, and mingled with misery, wretchedness and pain, it procures in the grand total of blessings and ills a preponderance of blessings.

Virtue, then, or incomplete happiness is the highest good to which we can aspire in this present life, the possession of God is the highest good to which we can aspire in the next life; and sound common-sense compels us to shut our eyes to everything else, to trim our desires, and limit our longings to the practice of virtue and the salvation of our immortal souls, or rest forever in the bosom of God. And so man's whole life becomes one long act of hope. We are forbidden the indulgence of delight. We must have no taste for any such smooth emotion. As we have said, delight turns on present good, and the summit of our aspirations, whether you make it incomplete or complete happiness, whether you make it virtue or the possession of God,

is somewhere off the earth; it eludes our grasp while we live; it is absent, terribly absent till we die. Our present condition makes the possession of God an impossibility in this life, and therefore it is destined to forever remain an absent good till we die. Even virtue never becomes an altogether present good. Saints never sit down to count their virtues over, and revel an hour in their sense of spiritual wealth. Virtue's measure is never filled, new habits have to be acquired, new acts have to be put, no hour of the day or night is without its new lessons, and the eternal task of hammering ourselves into shape for the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem is absolutely without end and limit. With St. Paul, we must forget the things that are behind, and press forward to the things that are in front. Therefore, as long as we live the possession of God is an absent good, virtue itself in its completeness is an absent good; and, since hope turns altogether on absent good, man's life on earth is one long act of hope. Hope is therefore a very important virtue. Faith is its basis and foundation, charity is its finish and consummation. But hope after all is the one practical need of our lives. Faith without good works is nothing, this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; but hope is the one big incentive able to keep us to our duty, strong with the strength of God to enable us to multiply our good works and hold fast in temptation to the observance of God's laws.

The lessons hope teaches are as numerous as they are helpful. We set too high a value on trifles, we hope

for good things unworthy of notice, we really and truly behave as if complete happiness were within present reach. We break our rules to avoid discomfort, we go wide of obedience to secure our ease, we do violence to our vows for purposes of pleasure. It is folly to look for satisfaction in forbidden delights. Beginners in the spiritual life are sometimes tempted to think that a certain step forward in the field of pleasure will constitute a limit beyond which they will not aspire to go, that this or that gratification will induce sleep and put them in quiet possession of contentment. Let them take the step and they will find to their sorrow that satisfaction is now farther off than ever. One want fulfilled gives rise to another, and life is too short even to hope for the accomplishment of our wishes. Passion for unholy pleasure is a fire, and fire has a voracious appetite. Food only increases its hunger. Fire could devour the world and still remain hungry, if another world started up in its path. The only way to extinguish fire is to deny it food, remove inflammable material from its path. Then it falls a ready victim to its own fury, and its power for destructiveness is gone. Passion for pleasure is a fire, and it must be met the same way. To hope to appease it by successive gratifications is out of the question, and the sooner we begin the starving process, the earlier we make the date of our emancipation from slavery, the nearer we get to peace, contentment and happiness.

Hope counsels patience in affliction, and the larger half of holiness consists in painfully trudging along in the bleeding footsteps of Christ. The sufferings of

this life are as nothing compared with the weight of glory they work unto the elect. No cross, no crown, and Christ had to suffer to enter His kingdom. In the eyes of faith the world is made up of very poor merchants. They barter their souls for money, fame, pleasure; they refuse service to God and spurn aside His splendid reward, to slave to the devil for shockingly low wages. The world is made up of idolaters, and the idol they worship is the demon in some shape or other. He hath power to assume a pleasing shape; and with the miser he is Plutus, with the demagogue he is Jupiter, with the voluptuous and gay he is Venus or Bacchus. History repeats itself, and we are living over the idolatry that flourished in pagan Greece and pagan Rome. Jupiter with his forked beard and flashing thunderbolts appealed to their senses, Venus rising in smooth beauty from the foam of the sea, captivated their attention. But our modern pagans see a more ravishing spectacle in political power, they see more allurements in unholy pleasure than any of the Greeks or Romans ever saw in their statues of Jupiter and Venus. It takes the eyes of faith to pierce the disguise and detect in hiding behind Jupiter and Venus a red devil hot from hell.

Hope can supply us with all the stout courage needed to successfully meet and resist temptation. Our hope is founded in Christ; and Christ's cross sets Him on a pedestal and crowns Him hope's angel to men. We hope for complete happiness, we pray for salvation through the merits of Christ. Every prayer we make, no matter what the nature of its beginning,

22 CHARITY AND OUR THREE VOWS

middle and progress, closes always at the foot of the cross. When we address Heaven, *per Christum Dominum nostrum* is the unvarying peroration, and our Church insists everywhere on the formula. With the strength put at our disposal by the cross of Christ we cannot lose heart in time of battle, we cannot despair in time of defeat. To save us, God the Father poured out His divine Son's precious blood to its last drop. He will halt at no lesser sacrifice, to secure our redemption and lift us at last to the Heaven of our hopes, purchased for us by Good Friday's wealth of sorrow.

III

GOD AND CHARITY

“Let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they.” Wisdom, 13, 3.

CHARITY is love, and, wherever the heart encounters beauty, it straightway becomes a prisoner to love. This statement is full of deep significance, and it needs explanation. You may remember that in our division of the soul's emotions we enumerated nine. All nine easily run into two classes, love and hate. As we saw, desire, delight, hope and despair are manifestations of love, because they turn on good; aversion, displeasure, fear and courage are manifestations of hate, because they turn on evil; while anger is a mixture of love and hate, because it is stirred by the immediate presence of good and evil together. Love therefore is a well defined effect produced in the soul, and good is in large part its cause. Love is appetite for good, and every throb of the heart is due to the enticement of some alluring good. Good itself is best described as what contributes in any large or small degree to a person's welfare or perfection. Thus, health is good, because it develops the body; wisdom is good, because it develops the mind; virtue is good, because it develops the soul, and makes the whole man ready for complete happiness, or the possession of God in the beatific vision. Whatever is good, whatever contributes to one's

welfare or perfection is of its very nature lovable; and, when face to face with a thing of the kind, love is sure to follow.

And now we return to our original statement. Charity, we said, is love; and, wherever the heart encounters beauty, it straightway becomes a prisoner to love. If you notice, we have substituted beauty for good; and, to hold our position, we must be able to show that one is the other, that beauty is good, and good is beauty. We are in the world of knowledge, in the realm of æsthetics; and small reflection can satisfy us that in the world of knowledge or æsthetics beauty is the one great and predominant good. Beauty itself is somewhat hard to define; but it is enough for us to know that beauty is the one thing in the world able to provoke in eye, and ear, and mind, a sense of satisfaction and contentment. Beauty is order, because order is that arrangement of parts in a whole, best calculated to accomplish a set purpose; and beauty is that collection of graces, that assemblage of alluring qualities in thing or person that appeals with peculiar emphasis to the eye or ear or mind within the radius of its influence. Order in class, order in an army, order in the parts of a house, order in the contour of a fair face or attractive figure, are all familiar examples of beauty. Disorder is beauty's capital enemy. When the hair is disheveled, the head is in disorder; when the nose is too big for the other features, the face is in disorder; the eyes are in disorder, when they never look where they see; and tousled hair, a too prominent nose, a squint in the eye are no marks of beauty, but the

opposite. Beauty then in last analysis is order, order is beauty, and nothing in the whole world is so swift to halt the attention of eye, or ear, or mind, or heart, as the beauty born of order. In the words of Lacordaire, beauty is the unique cause of love; love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. The order apparent everywhere in creation is what first hints of God's creative touch, and every work of order in the universe from the field-daisy to the glorious sun is a footprint of the Creator. God is all order, and therefore all beauty; and to ascribe disorder to God, would be to reduce Him to the level of a creature, strip Him of infinite perfection, and rob Him of divinity. Creatures are a mixture of order and disorder, and this very circumstance proclaims them equally fit objects for love and hatred. Whatever elements of order they possess can be loved, whatever elements of disorder they possess can be hated. And the whole secret of loving creatures lies in man's ability to shut his eyes tight to whatever ugly or disordered characteristics they possess, and open his eyes wide to the beauty or order they betray. Thus, men ambitious of their neighbors' esteem are at infinite pains to hide their faults, while stage favorites and society leaders have recourse to every known process of paint, and powder, and dress, to conceal irregularities in face or figure. In much the same way, love is said to be blind, because it helps the lover to pass unnoticed or transmute in the object of his affections repulsive qualities, that hold the attention of and disgust ordinary mortals.

Old Horace has some lines on this subject, and they are full of wisdom. He is talking of a fond father's love for his children. One child has a squint in his eye, and the father never tires admiring what he calls the roguish or saucy look of his son. Another is a deformed dwarf, and the father delights to call him his chick. Still another is bow-legged, and the father dilates with pride on the roundness and trim appearance of his ankles. And, quick to point his story with a moral, Horace drives home a lesson in common everyday charity, that could well fill a place of honor in à Kempis or Rodriguez. He would have us imitate this father in our treatment of our neighbor. With him we must be blind to others' faults, and actually reckon virtues what we have hitherto considered vices. We must count the miser a model of frugality. A bore and a noisy person we must esteem as a man eager to entertain his listeners. A somewhat rough and overbold friend must be rated simple and strenuous. Anger must be reputed earnestness. The poet then reminds us of how prone we are to follow opposite methods, and see faults where none exist. We condemn virtue as abject want of spirit, and account the saint among us no sport and a regular kill-joy. A deliberate and careful soul we call a slow poke. A wise and prudent person we write down a wily fox or a hypocrite. We can with profit make our own the lesson Horace here teaches in his own inimitable way. Life in community would be a paradise of delights, if we opened our eyes wide to the good qualities of our neighbors, and either shut them tight to their faults or

transformed their faults with the help of love's witchery to stunning and splendid virtues. Marriage would seem to be a great school for the cultivation of this art. The man and woman, before they approach the altar for the priest's blessing, are usually angels or close approximations to the same in the eyes of one and the other. Before a year of wedded bliss runs round, their mutual faults begin to appear with alarming persistency, and love's young dream comes to a quick pause, unless they have an infinite store of patience, or play blind, or practise the self-deception the father in Horace practised. True husbands and true wives, with the help of this simple artifice, contrive to walk all the way from the altar to the grave without an hour of worry, without a single harsh word of bitterness or reproach.

But all this in passing. Our present subject is love of God. Later we shall have more to say regarding love for the neighbor. God is no mixture of order and disorder. He is all order, all beauty. He has no faults to hide, no blemishes to correct. He invites our closest scrutiny. In our study of God's attributes, the discovery of repellent traits is not even a remote danger. To grow in knowledge of God, is to grow in love for God. He improves on acquaintance, and the world is a stranger to love of God primarily and principally because the world is too busy with trifles to meditate a single hour God's glorious qualities. Even our Catholics are not above the temptation. They pay God the small tribute of thought involved in morning and evening prayer, they hear Mass on Sunday, and

follow the preacher with some small measure of interest as he rambles through a five-minute sermon. Few of them have the courage and good will needed to take up the Scripture and study God in action as revealed in the pages of the gospels. Fewer still pause at intervals in their labors to lift their minds and their hearts to God in prayer. They are far from seeing God everywhere. The book of creation is spread open to their eyes, and its lessons are entirely or in great part lost. From sunrise to sunset God's myriad beauties pass in review without meeting the scant courtesy of respectful attention, and images of loveliness God mercifully meant to raise their thoughts to Heaven, drag them down on no few occasions to hell. And in spite of our own opportunities, in spite of the atmosphere of faith and piety in which we live and move, in spite of the pictures on the walls, the saints we meet about the house, our nearness to the chapel, and the thousand incentives to holiness everywhere conspicuous, we religious are in imminent danger of walking the way of worldlings in this matter of recollection. Instead of growing clearer and clearer to our vision, God may be daily becoming more and more a mystery to us, and all because we refuse or neglect to think in our hearts, all because we lose sight of the one grand lesson we entered this school of holiness to learn, the unspeakable secret of God's supreme beauty and loveliness. Every other study we undertake is a side branch, an elective, worse than waste of time unless coupled with the one thing necessary. Our diploma, our degree in the kingdom of God, depends

on our progress in divine knowledge; and divine knowledge is that theology of the heart, with God for topic, with God for teacher, and with absorbing interest for pledge and earnest of success. We are not, I venture to think, the practical students we ought to be in our efforts towards knowledge of God. Philosophers, astronomers, chemists, could teach us lessons in the matter of energetic industry. They devote hours, and days, and years to the solution of problems with a bearing on men's minds. They journey to the other side of the world to witness an eclipse, they spend nights on the house-top to follow the stars in their wanderings and map the level sweep of the heavens. By day and by night they are busy in the laboratory, watching this reaction and that, establishing and verifying laws, compelling the earth and the air, fire and water, to yield up the secrets that constitute science. God is our study; and, with a view to growth in love for God, His wondrous beauty is the feature we single out for attention; a fuller and fuller appreciation of His infinite loveliness is our consecrated purpose.

God then is our study, and His goodness or beauty is the attribute in God that appeals with most emphasis to our love. We cannot possibly grow in our knowledge of God's goodness or beauty without at the same time growing in love for Him; and, in what measure we know God, in that measure are we going to love Him. Our subject is large and wide; and, not to be overwhelmed by it, we must divide, we must take it in sections, we must approach God from different sides. We must study God in His creatures, we must

study God in Himself. In both particulars He is all good and all beautiful. And in a future talk we mean to develop these two views of God, and so compel ourselves to pay Him the measure of love He deserves at our hands. For the present we want to conclude with a hurried glance at the stupendous proportions, the large dimensions of the love charity exacts from us when God is its object. Christ Himself sets the measure when He says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." Beauty prompts love, and infinite beauty cannot be satisfied with anything short of love without limit. God is infinite beauty, He is an accumulation of amiable characteristics, He is loveliness itself; and as such He can never be adequately loved by finite lovers, whether angels or men. And yet He insists on His rights in this matter, He wants our love for Him to set in motion every energy at our disposal. He wants our heart and the whole of it, He wants our soul and the whole of it, He wants our mind and the whole of it. And the man who refuses God a corner of his heart, a breath of his soul, a thought of his mind, is at the moment of his refusal a fool, a scoundrel and a thief. He is a fool, because he is at odds with right reason; he is a scoundrel, because he insults Omnipotence; he is a thief, because he robs his Lord of service and glory. God wants the whole of our heart. He is willing to let a mother entertain tender feelings for her child, He is willing to let a friend entertain tender feelings for his friend. But He forbids the mother and the friend to allow

any guest to cross the threshold of their hearts, unless that guest is sealed in some way with the mark of God. In other words, no guest must enter the sacred precincts of a man's heart unattended. Admittance must be sternly refused whatever guest, unless God stands at his side and introduces him. Charity, then, resolves itself into loving God for Himself, and others for God's sweet sake. Hence St. Ignatius' standard of holiness, "To strip self of all love for creatures, fusing love for them into love for their Creator, loving Him in all creatures, and them all in Him, according to His most holy and divine will."

IV

GOD AND CHARITY

"And the care of discipline is love, and love is the keeping of wisdom's laws." Wisdom, 6, 19.

CHARITY is love, and the saying is true whether God is its object or the neighbor. We are on terms of intimate familiarity with the sacred emotion of love, and a life touched nowhere in its progress by love is an unfinished thing. But the trouble with us is that our loves are oftener human than divine, men and women are oftener their objects than God; and, altogether unskilled as we are in the art of loving God, we come by swift degrees to think that love changes its nature with its object, that love is one kind of thing when it bears on the neighbor, another when it bears on God. We finish by parcelling out to creatures what is best and worthiest in our affections, reserving for God a hitherto unnamed something, a strange mixture of reverence, and fear, and awe, a something as different from real love as night is from day. The flower of love is red, and our love for God is bloodless. The whole thing looks plain to me. Love is an absorbing pursuit, it is preëminently occupying; and our love for God is far from holding our attention for a single whole day, even in time of retreat. It easily yields place to thoughts of business,

thoughts of pleasure; and long indulgence of the emotion exerts a strain. Witness the morning meditation, the noon examen, spiritual reading and what not. Love is a stranger to compulsion, and yet our catechism deems it wise and necessary to remind us that at intervals during the year we are morally bound to elicit an act of love for God. Love is free as the untrammelled air. Whoso measures his heart-beats and counts his tokens of affection with all the mean exactness of a miser, is incapable of love, and no fit pupil for the school of God's infinite fondness. We must therefore look to our love of God. We must often weigh it, with an eye always to the sentiments awakened in the heart by loves of earth. We must search out and find what characteristics separate human lovers from men and women outside the sphere of love's despotic influence, and we must introduce these characteristics into our love of God. We must often animate ourselves to love of God by considerations kindred to the thoughts that make men and women willing prisoners to love's sublime frenzy. In human love there are certain well established principles, and these principles ought to play just as important a part in our love for God. Thus, the world is agreed that in this business of love deeds count for more than words or empty desires. The world is agreed that love is pain, that pain is love's shadow, that pain is never absent from the side of love, and that pain's near presence kills suspicion about love's quality. The world is likewise agreed that love always betrays itself in a readiness on the part of the lover to share

his talents, his time, his wealth, everything, with the object of his affections. God never forgets these three golden principles in His love for us, and He wants us never to lose sight of them in our love for Him. The deeds of kindness He has done, does, and still shall do us, are without number. He has poured out upon us the riches of His wealth, and He ardently desires to give us Himself in Heaven.

Love provokes love, we love them that love us. And this is the love of God that we keep His Commandments, that we keep our vows, that we keep our rules. This is the love of God, that we behave towards God as men and women in love behave towards the person they love. This is the love of God, that we praise Him, worship Him, serve Him all the days of our life. These are exactly the three ways men and women manifest their affection. They praise a friend, they worship a friend, they slave to the interests of a friend. Like the amiable old father in Horace, lovers see virtues where none exist, with the help of enthusiastic self-deception they transform faults into excellences, and where faults resist every such process, they forget them, they fall blind to their presence. They crowd their minds with a fair or unfair appreciation of a friend's qualities, publish them to the large or small world within reach of their voice, and actually lose patience with such as refuse to pay the same full homage to their heroes. They worship a friend, give him next place to God in their thoughts, treasure every little memorial of his kindness, the words said at parting, the letters he wrote while away, and come danger-

ously near paying the relics of a friend that higher veneration due the relics of a saint. They serve a friend as no slave ever served a master. Love drives the husband from home to the inconveniences, the discomforts and annoyances encountered at the store, at the office, in the workshop, and on the street. Love drives the wife to exult in the drudgery of household cares, in the killing loneliness of domestic imprisonment; in the noise, and the clatter, and the toil attached to bringing up a family. A lodge in the wilderness is paradise enough when the person we love shares our solitude. And love is always striving towards resemblances. Resemblances between lovers are always the first outcome of friendship, even if they are not always its root and foundation. I have known people that fond of a friend they imitated his handwriting, affected his style of dress, and copied the very idiosyncrasies of his talk and outward conduct.

These are some of the tributes love exacts from its servants, when men and women are its objects; and our love for God is not what the lexicon of childhood, youth or old age calls love, unless it compels us to the same heroism, the same devotion, the same consecration. A saint's love for God is above suspicion. No man ever loved a woman, no woman ever loved a man, with the same full measure of tenderness and limitless generosity that characterizes a saint's love for God. A saint praises God by day and by night, and no interval of the day, no interval of the night, is without its silent or prayerful homage of admiration, without its word in season to stir and warm the cold

hearts of cold listeners, without its loud and penetrating sermon of good example. A saint worships God, walks always and with care in His unseen presence, hates the company of men when it proves a hindrance to recollection, and envies Antony of old in the desert, Jerome in his cave near Bethlehem and Stylites on his pillar in the wilderness. A saint's service of God is in full accord with God's sublime dignity. The world knows no such master as God; and naturally enough, the world is a stranger to servants like the saints. They not only do the will of God the way He wants it done, but they are beforehand with His wishes, they do more than He wants in a superior way, and instead of a stimulus to activity in God's service they need the salutary check of religious prudence to keep their zeal within due and proper bounds. They are never less alone than when alone with God. Christ is their Model in every respect. His divine life is the one book they study with desire, and they see in every line of the gospels a new lesson to be copied into their conduct.

We imperfect religious have cause to be ashamed when we sit down and reflect. Our praise of God, our worship of God, our service of God, suffer not only by comparison with those of the saints, but they actually suffer by comparison with the praise, worship, and service men and women render one another in the ordinary walks of life. And the blush of shame stirred in our cheeks by the sorry reflection ought to sting our hearts to reform. It must prompt us to determine with ourselves at least to love God as much as a friend loves a friend, a husband his wife, a wife her husband.

We are deaf to inspiration, we have not quite grasped the enormity of our degradation, unless we resolve henceforward to welcome the crosses inseparable from life in religion, the reproaches of superiors, the unkindness of companions, and general dissatisfaction with self; unless we take immediate and effective measures to rise to the sublimest and serenest heights of consummate union with God, where, earth left behind, we shall dream perhaps of its annoyances, but never experience them; unless we generously determine to consecrate all the energies of our being to the work of our soul's sanctification, ready for consolation and desolation, meeting all the day's duties, spiritual and otherwise, with genuine enthusiasm, with never a word of complaint, with never a sigh of impatience, with never a murmur of discontent. In last analysis these are the practical and important elements of praise, worship and service; they in turn constitute love of God, they are a fair index of our love's strength or weakness; and if our love for God is no intenser than that of man for woman, or woman for man, our lives are imperfect and open to improvement.

Love provokes love, we love them that love us, all the world loves a lover, these and kindred expressions have their explanation in the one circumstance that beauty is the unique cause of love, and beauty is order. In our selfish eyes nothing perhaps wears a more attractive appearance than the court paid us by a friend; and the picture loses only a little of its beauty when another happens to be the recipient of the favor. The love love provokes is imperfect. When we love

God because He loves us, our love is true, it is genuine, it has Heaven's approval, and stirs kindred emotions in God. But it looks too much like a transaction of justice, too much like payment of an honorable debt, too much like a matter of business, to satisfy the aspirations of a supremely unselfish heart, captive to beauty, bent on loving without return, blind to everything but the appealing loveliness of its object. We are all well aware of the differences between perfect and imperfect love of God. Our catechism is only rehearsing an old and worn truth, when it tells us that imperfect love of God wins pardon for sin only when combined with confession, while perfect love of God wins the same favor apart from confession, by its own single and unaided efficacy. Imperfect love keeps always in view God's favors; we love God because He loves us, and the whole emotion has for basic motive and foundation the hell from which He rescues us, the Heaven to which He invites us. Perfect love, on the contrary, shutting its eyes to God's favors to open them wide on God Himself, has for basic motive and foundation God's wondrous attributes or perfections, His wisdom, His holiness, His omnipotence, His all comprehending and incomprehensible beauty. Therefore, the one effective way to grow in imperfect love is to grow in appreciation of God's multiplied favors, and this can be best accomplished by making them the frequent subject of prayerful meditation. We must never tire of studying and weighing the gifts made us in creation, conservation, coöperation, redemption; we must recall with grateful affection the several and

separate kindnesses done us in childhood, youth and old age. The one effective way to grow in perfect love is to fill our mind with larger and larger notions of God's surpassing beauty, studying Him in His portraits or images, the myriad wonders of creation, in the physical order and the moral order, in the world of sense and the world of intellect. And these studies we leave to a future talk, concluding for the present with the reminder that this love for God, whether imperfect or perfect, is a supernatural act, a free gift of God, altogether unattainable by our unaided resources, and prayer is again in order. We must pray God without ceasing to supplement our natural weakness in this matter, to take our minds off trifles and fasten them on Him, to help us see in whatever alluring object crosses our vision a vivid and lifelike reminder of the infinite perfection it was meant from eternity to reflect and impress on our dull intelligence.

V

GOD AND CHARITY

"God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son."
St. John, 3, 16.

IMPERFECT love of God, we saw, has God's multiplied favors for basic motive and foundation; and the most effective way to grow in imperfect love is to make God's favors frequent subject of prayerful meditation. Perfect love of God, on the contrary, shuts its eyes on God's favors to open them wide on God's infinite perfections; and the most effective way to grow in perfect love of God is to study Him in His portraits or images, the myriad wonders of creation in the physical order and in the moral order, in the world of sense and in the world of intellect. And this is the pleasant task we now set ourselves. We want to forage through life, discover the conspicuous favors done us by Almighty God, and all with a view to growth in love for Him who loved us beyond measure. Some of these favors we received at God's hands in common with the rest of mankind, and their very commonness renders them less striking and less emphatic. Others were proper and peculiar to ourselves, falling to the lot of nobody besides, and their very restriction or limitation to our single selves appeals with more force to all the hiding energies of our gratitude. Creation, preservation, co-

operation, redemption are perhaps chiefest among the favors done us in common with the rest of mankind, and we are grown so accustomed to their use that they have lost in our eyes some of their magnificent and splendid proportions. A word therefore about each may serve to renew their impressiveness and compel us to larger love of their generous provider. He made us body and soul, summoned us from nothingness, set us down in the order of concrete realities, and equipped us with all the splendid possibilities of life. And when God creates a man or woman, what a wonder He performs! He creates a body with all its marvellous parts fitted for the functions of life; with eyes for seeing the colors of nature and the faces of friends we love; with ears for hearing the music of the world and fondly familiar voices; with hands for touching, and taking, and giving; with tongues for tasting sweetness and telling our heart's joys and sorrows; with faces bearing the unmistakable stamp of God's beauty, and kindliness and splendor. He creates a soul, the deathless element within us, subject to none of the vicissitudes of time or change or season, able to mount on wings above the aches and disappointments of this lower sphere, and be always happy in the house of God, the home of its immortality. He gifts this soul with a memory mercifully meant to hold the past in its too rapid flight, to summon the future from its grave, and blend all time into an hour of present blessedness. He gifts it with an intellect, the mistress of all our actions, possessed of the key to all our thoughts, words and deeds; the friend that even in solitude can people our fancies with

more congenial company than any we meet at society's crowded gatherings; the faculty that can make printed books talk with all the charm and none of the harshness of human tongues; the faculty that makes man creation's lord, ruler of this lower universe, owner and master of the animals, the fields, the seas and the rivers, with horses in harness to do his bidding, with acres of growing wheat to feed his body, with ships to plough the deep and carry commerce from harbor to harbor. He gifts this soul with a will, the moral prerogative in man, the power of dominion over self, the root of all responsibility, the right to choose between good and evil, the foundation of our claims to eternal happiness in Heaven, the instrument of heroism and sacrifice in God's service, making it possible for us to prefer pain and discomfort for God's sake, when the mere animal is obliged by instinct to seek pleasure and gratification. These then, are some of the gifts God makes man in creation, a body instinct with beauty and life, an immortal soul with a memory, a mind, and a will. He denies these gifts to no individual of the race. Beggars are as rich in their possession of a body and a soul as kings.

It is no fault of His that we labor, and suffer, and die. These evils were none of God's making. They are a legacy left us by our first parents, a penalty incurred by the whole human family because its progenitors forfeited privileges that were to descend to their children only on condition that they proved docile to God's order regarding the fruit of the forbidden tree. Nearly 6000 years away from the turn

in the tide of our fortunes, we sons of men are grown accustomed to our present fallen condition, and are come by slow degrees to accept our heavy lot as the natural order of things. Memory of the blessed privileges lost to us by a parent's folly awakens no regret. We are heirs robbed of our title to Paradise, and we are paying the penalty of a crime centuries old. We are the sons and daughters of a tainted race, and by dint of exercise we have learned to forget past happiness, and fondle present sorrow. To discover our forfeited title we need only turn to the opening pages of the Bible, and read the melancholy story of our parents' fall. The privileges they enjoyed are there set forth in detail, and we were to have been heirs to their high estate. The mines of the earth were theirs, to yield treasure without labor. The fields were to be scattered with plenty, ready the year round for harvest. The beasts we now denominate wild were to be tame and gentle, subservient to man's every wish. The seasons were to be tempered with sweetness, and lapse into unending spring. No weeds were to poison the meadow, or hinder the growing wheat. Mind was to be mistress of body, and passion lay dead. Ease blessed with the stamp of God's approval was to be our inheritance forever. There were to be no nights of fevered pain, no days of killing anxiety. Unburdened of life's manifold ills, the children of men were to greet the sunrise with a song of praise on their lips, and watch his setting with another hymn of thanksgiving. God was to come down at frequent intervals and walk the alley-ways of Eden in converse with men. There

was to be no death. The body by a surpassing gift of God was to be as immortal as the soul, and destined never to become by disease, or age, or accident, an unfit dwelling place for its heavenly tenant. After his allotted time in this garden of pleasure, man, the master and lord of creation, was to be transplanted to the skies without the rude interference of death. There were to be no houses of mourning, no funeral processions, no crape on the door, no emblems of sorrow, no widows, no orphans, no cities of the dead, with their mute and prayerful crosses, pointing broken hearts Heavenward. Ascensions like that of the Lord Christ were to be no startling miracles, but events of hourly occurrence. We may suppose that, when the longed for summons came, men would set a feast, and at its close, in the midst of music, would take farewell of their exultant wives, and sons, and daughters, sink to a peaceful sleep, and be borne by angels to the bosom of God. So planned the Eternal Father for His children. But sin spoiled His plans, one sin, a sin of deed, the disobedience of a disobedient race's parents.

And God comes down in anger! He is on an errand of justice. The calm wrath of omnipotence is unmistakable in His tones, and they smite the ears of hiding Adam and hiding Eve with terror. The sin of the angels is fresh as yesterday in His eternal memory, and this fall of man awakens new regrets. The trial of the trembling culprits is short and sharp. Its minutes are spread on the opening pages of Genesis. Their punishment is swift. The terms of the com-

mandment laid upon them are plain, their violation of the same admits of no defense or excuse. God's executioner in the person of an angel, armed with a sword of flame, conducts them to Eden's entrance gate, waves them forth, and stands threateningly to guard against their return. Down they go to the wilderness of wild beasts awaiting them for prey! The lion and the tiger slip their gentleness, to put on the ferocity that finds voice in the roar and growl of the jungle. Weeds are starting up on every side, to check earth's fertile growth. Venomous serpents are darting speckled fury and hissing poison through the grasses. The air is laden with imperceptible germs of disease. The four elements of nature enter into a conspiracy against the dethroned king of creation, and plot to burn him, drown him, kill him, and bury him. Many headed passion awakes in his bosom, and he experiences a stinging shame, against which his rude girdle of leaves is small refuge. Poverty, hunger, thirst; toil, unrest, worry; pain, dangers by sea and dangers by land; all the myriad woes, with which we are only too well acquainted, follow Adam and Eve into their valley of tears, their land of exile from the comfort and presence of God. For full 900 years, we are told, the father of our race tasted the bitterness of his sin, and did gruesome penance. For now nearly 6000 years his posterity have been paying the penalty of their progenitors' crime, and the measure of God's justice is not yet filled. The punishment still goes on; and God's justice would forever remain unsatisfied were it not for redemption in Jesus.

He paid an infinite price for our ransom, but He hedged it round about with conditions. Our Redemption from hell and sin at the cost of His divine Son's adorable blood is an immeasurably greater excess of God's love than creation itself. Our faith contains no more consoling dogma than redemption in Jesus. The scheme of redemption as proposed to us by our Church for belief is at the same time full of comfort, full of courage, and a ringing call to duty. It is full of comfort, because we who were hell's captives are now free. It is full of courage, because our Man of Sorrows made acquaintance with and welcomed grief able to bear down a giant. And to crown these favors of comfort and courage, the dogma of Redemption is a ringing call to duty, because, though our freedom was purchased at the cost of Christ's saving blood, we can retain it only by a generous life of self-sacrifice and self-denial. God could have made our salvation independent of our mean efforts. Certainly the plan would have approved itself to the lazy devotees of sin, it would have invested God's goodness with a doubtful kind of glory at the expense of His holiness, His justice, and His wisdom. But God never makes a mistake. And so, though He accepted Christ's Passion and death as full atonement for all our transgressions, He expects us and obliges us to make the merits of Christ our own by steady and resolute compliance with Christ's wishes. Christ put at our disposal a treasury abundantly able to cancel all our debts with an offended Father; but He at the same time imposed upon us the obligation of stirring ourselves, rising up,

and turning the key in the lock. He transferred the vigor of His efforts in our behalf, the merits of His thirty-three years on earth, to the Sacraments and other means of grace, and bade us make use of these means if we would be saved. If any Christian in this enlightened age of ours neglects to avail himself of the opportunity, he cannot plead ignorance for excuse. Christ through the agency of His mouthpiece, the true Church, has published His wishes to the world, and ignorance in the face of such enlightenment is inexcusable. Prejudice, worldliness, love of ease, may indeed account for the folly of men who neglect the Sacraments and other means of grace; but prejudice, worldliness, love of ease, when they clash with the laws of God, are punishable offenses. Christ, then, is our redeemer, but after such a manner that His death will avail us nothing unless we do our half of the work. His grace can be had for the asking, but it will not be granted unless application is made. From Baptism the Sacrament of infancy to Extreme Unction the Sacrament of old age, the Church, the dispenser of Christ's gifts to men, holds out to us helps adapted to every period and every condition of life. Moreover, Christ in his capacity of redeemer filled a three-fold office, He was at the same time Saviour, teacher, and King. As Saviour, He left us scattered up and down the gospels precious legacies of virtue for our imitation. As King, He founded a Church, and invited us, summoned us to huddle close together under the safety of His standard. As invisible Head of this Church, He is seated on a throne, watching its members

fight the good fight of salvation, like an army in battle array. His vicar, His visible representative, the Pope of Rome, lights up in our minds a torch that unfailingly illumines our pathway. We Catholics follow no uncertain or warring leaders. Doubts never overcast our faith; and while strangers on the outside drive ahead, not knowing whither, we husband the strength they squander on vain inquiry, to confirm our wills in good, and make ready a clean abode in our hearts for God. God wants us to save our souls, He wants us to be forever happy with Him in Heaven; but it is a good thing to know that He will derive no sorrow, no inconvenience whatever, from our eternal residence in hell. Whether we go to Heaven or hell, His glory remains substantially the same. Whether we make the happiness of the elect or the pains of the damned our lot for eternity, God shall derive from creation the very amount of glory and praise He determined on having from the beginning. His Son, Jesus Christ, died for us, poured out the last drop of His blood for us. He is Himself through the agency of His priests dinning words of warning into our ears, and conscience is loud in denouncing our manifold disloyalties.

But when all is said, it still remains true that our destiny is in our own hands. Good and evil, weal and woe, are set before us to choose, and to whatever side we stretch our hands, God has solemnly promised to sacredly respect our choice. The efficacy of Redemption, the constraining power of grace, the freedom of human liberty, are all hard questions, and must for-

ever remain partial mysteries. Calvary's sacrifice is sufficient ransom for a million worlds, and yet some of the ransomed are going to walk past the cross to hell. Grace is the might of an omnipotent God, and yet the feebleness of man can resist it and defeat it. Free will is a creature vested with some of the independence and some of the omnipotence of the Creator. Redemption is, therefore, from one point of view universal in its effects; from another point of view, limited. Grace from one point of view is strong as God; from another point of view, as weak as water. Human liberty cannot from one point of view lift a finger, from another point of view, it can institute rebellion against God. But we Catholics are not in these matters ships tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We have a Church, armed with credentials from on high, and though she presumes not to clear up every mystery, she leaves us in no doubt about what we have to believe on every one of these several heads. Her doctrine is clear and fixed, admitting of absolutely no doubt, dispute or compromise. Men may from prejudice, pride or selfishness, refuse to enter her fold, they may object to the unprogressive rigidity of her teaching, and heap with blame her undying attitude of intolerance against error; but there she stands, her arms wide open to receive, without a single concession to the clamors of passion, whatever son or daughter of God seeks peace and salvation.

Creation, therefore, and redemption are the most splendid favors done us by Almighty God, and they

are entirely lost on us, they fail of their purpose, unless thought of them spurs us on to new endeavor in the love and service of God. It is somehow easier to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, when we reflect that we get from God all our capacity for loving, the very root and principle of our life, and the mind within us that knows and understands. Love of God becomes a matter of honesty and square dealing. It is a species of restitution, wherein we return borrowed articles to their rightful owner. In virtue of creation God owns us body and soul, and to refuse Him a throb of the heart, a breath of the soul, any single thought of the mind, any single deed of the hands, is to steal, it is to incur the shame and guilt of the meanest and most despicable of crimes. To employ our hearts, our souls, our minds or our hands to any purpose save God's greater glory, is to abuse God's goodness, insult God's majesty, and invite His omnipotent wrath. He made us body and soul, He wants every movement of our body, every aspiration of our soul to contribute to His glory, and His wishes must be respected under penalty of His displeasure.

Redemption is even more provocative of love than creation. It is a greater favor, and we regularly measure our love for a friend by the size of his generosity. When God created us we were no objects of His wrath, no objects of annoyance in His holy eyes. Personally we were without sin at our creation, and sin is the one thing in the universe able to stir discomfort or displeasure in God. But before redemp-

tion we were sin from head to foot, every particle of our being cried out to divine justice for our instant death and destruction. And God, deaf to the clamors of His justice, opened wide His ears to the softer plea of pity, cancelling with His saving blood the handwriting against us, received us back to friendship, agreed to forget the past, and put within easy reach all the helps we need to mend our broken fortunes and save our immortal souls. To love an unoffending friend is human; to love an offensive, trivial, contemptible enemy, is divine; and God alone is equal to the large love manifest in men's redemption. A greater favor than redemption is impossible, a person less worthy of the favor than ourselves is unthinkable; and martyrdom itself is some small recompense for redemption only because God's justice stands satisfied when debtors do their utmost to discharge obligations.

VI

GOD AND CHARITY

“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” St. John, 13, 1.

To halt here in our consideration of God's goodness would be to leave our work incomplete. Our continuance or preservation in life is due altogether to the omnipotence He exerts in our behalf every hour of the day and night. His almighty hand sets in motion every breath we draw, and if we once slipped from His memory, we should in that instant fall back into our original nothingness. God is busier in our behalf than we think. Not content with crowding the universe with creatures meant for man's especial use, to bid the more appealingly for our love, He is everywhere, in every nook and corner of creation; present, actually present in every individual creature, the large and the small, the king and the peasant, the oak and the primrose, the star and the fire-fly, the moon and the glow-worm. For man's convenience He has with nice precision graded existences, giving to each severally its own peculiar characteristics; to minerals, being; to plants, life and growth; to animals, life, growth and sense; to men, life, growth, sense and mind. As members of the human family we have received the entire outfit at His hands, life, growth, sense and mind. He

has besides made us to His own image and likeness, a little less than the angels, and so marked us off from the rest of creation, to be his own temple of glory, the shrine of His everlasting love. Thunderstruck at thought of our borrowed dignity we must pass in silent wonder from the God of majesty to our wretched selves, and examine the claims God's presence in the universe has on our love and loyalty. God is here, there, everywhere. I can hear the solemn tones of Jehovah in converse with His prophet, "Walk with care before the Lord." "Walk before me, and be perfect." I am in the continual presence of God. The whole round earth is a holy place. I am never out of His sleepless eyes. I slumber on the Master's bosom, I carry God in my body as in a temple. Perpetual adoration of this Omnipresent God is the only attitude consistent with faith. Our very bodies are churches, tabernacles, vessels of the altar. Keep them holy. "Keep this house forever undefiled." II Mach. 14, 36.

God's presence in His creatures is no idle indwelling. Coöperation on God's part is as much a need to the activity of contingent beings as preservation is to their existence. To keep pace with the truth, we must study God at work in His creatures on our account. His wisdom manages whatever stirs in this vast universe. His omnipotent arm sustains its weight. To speak after the manner of men, God is tired out and in pain from His varied exertions in nature. He makes the sun to rise and set at regular intervals. In consummate order season succeeds to season at

His bidding. Under His fostering care every sprig of clover takes root, blossoms and breaks into leaf and flower. He preserves things in being, He coöperates with them in every detail of action. And what is the lesson? Why, work, work, work in the service of God. It is the return He wants. To win His favor, we must work and never tire. There are no long vacations in the service of God, no seasons in the mountains or at the seashore. We are day laborers in the field waiting for the evening bell to summon us home to sit down to supper at the table of the Lamb.

Besides this universal presence in creation, due to His attribute of immensity and rooted in His very essence, God is ever present on our altars, an additional favor reserved to Christian times and due to a Father's fondness for His children. When Israel was His chosen people, Jehovah once a year gave audience to His high-priest in the Holy of Holies, that inner room of the temple curtained from the gaze of the worshippers. God is with us all the year round on our altars, a prisoner in the tabernacle during the long hours of the day and the longer hours of the night, carried in procession on certain solemn occasions, raised aloft to give audience and a blessing to His servants at Benediction, and born anew at Bethlehem, slain anew on Calvary every morning of the year at Mass. We ought to multiply our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. God lives under the same roof with religious, and love of chapel ought to be a passion with religious. God is with us in the Holy Eucharist to comfort us, to dry

our tears, to hear our prayers, allay our fears. To dwell forever in the Eucharistic Presence, St. Catherine of old built herself a cell near the church-window.

What people is blessed with so near a presence of God as we? And this very nearness of God to His people constitutes the Holy Eucharist the Sacrament of God's love for men. Charity is love. Love is union, community of interests, communication of gifts. Love is labor and all through history pain is never absent from the side of love. It is love's shadow and its presence kills suspicion about love's quality. "No man hath greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." "With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you." "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And the end is not bounded by His thirty-three years on earth. His visible presence is gone, His Real Presence perseveres till time's finish on our altars, till time's brief interruption yields to unending enjoyment of closer vision in Heaven. And oh the pain attendant on God's stay among men! Christ dies no more a real physical death, but the sacrifice goes on. Christ suffers no more, but love still feeds on sorrow. Judas still lives, and the traitor's kiss is renewed, repeated over and over again in unworthy communion. Peter in the person of a railing and unbelieving world is denying the Master with curses and oaths. Herod is mocking the Lord Christ in the ill-concealed sneer of the infidel and the irreligious. Other Pilates are burning incense at the shrine of political ambition, delivering God up to His enemies, standing with Cæsar as

against Christ, with years of time and lives of energy to waste on greed, pleasure and power, without a single hour to do allegiance to the God on our altars in Holy Communion. And our streets are choked with a holiday crowd journeying countryward like the demons of Jews on Good Friday to see Christ nailed to the cross, to see virtue done to death in dens of infamy and shame, in the foul charnel-houses of souls. And the silent Christ in the solitude of love's prison-house, our tabernacle, hears in pain the shuffling feet of hell's slaves as they come and go on their errand of hate. His delight is to be with the children of men, and stray prodigals cannot quite dampen the ardor of His love for elder brothers, who never left their Father's house.

The Incarnation, the life, passion and death of Christ are other reminders of God's surpassing love for mankind. To encounter toil in our behalf, God left His throne in Heaven, became a man like other men, tasted every sorrow this earth knows, shrank from the cold, felt the pangs of hunger and thirst, was bowed to the ground with disappointment, saw His efforts crowned with failure, knew the overwhelming pain of false friendship, walked the length and breadth of Judea, preaching, working miracles, curing diseases, and died in ignominy and torment. Verily He was tired out and in pain during these thirty-three years. And how the agony grew as His end approached. Saints warm their love for God at the foot of the crucifix. And we must imitate them. We must see Him on His face in the garden of sorrows, with blood on the ground

about. We must see Him at the pillar, His entire body running with blood. We must hear the scourges fall on His defenceless shoulders. We must climb Calvary, and watch His giant soul going out in the darkness of Good Friday to His Father. He died for you, He died for me; and we are monsters of ingratitude, if our love continues cold in face of such an example. The cross of Christ is the last measure of God's love for mankind. He Himself at the Last Supper set the high standard, "No man hath greater love than this that he lay down his life for his friend." Our sins are the nails in Christ's hands and feet. Our crimes sharpened the spear-edge that tore open His sacred side. His death is our doing, and the cross is an undying witness to our ingratitude and meanness. Martyrdom is supremest test of man's love for God. He died for us. In all fairness we ought to be ready to die for Him. But this test is beyond our reach. The days of persecution are gone. The Neros and Domitians of old Rome are dead and forgotten. The Coliseum is an empty and silent ruin, the headsman's axe is idle, and the beasts of the bloody arena are no more. We cannot die for Christ, but we can live for Him; and that perhaps is the harder task. And to ring true, to be holocausts fit for God's approving notice, our lives must be permeated with the spirit of the martyrs. No matter the pain, no matter the agony, we must keep His commandments, we must keep our vows, we must keep our rules. The martyrs of old hailed death with a prayer and a song; and we must with the same genuine enthusiasm welcome the obscu-

ality, the reproaches, the unkindness, the disappointments inseparable from life in the convent and cloister. Penance of heart as well as penance of body must be our consecrated employment, and we must never tire of harassing our old enemy, the flesh with its passions and concupiscences. And this is Lent, the season of penance. The two virtues of justice and religion demand this tribute of penance at our hands. We have contracted heavy debts with God Almighty, and our payment must be of a kind with the heavy wage exacted by the Father from His dying Son. God is supreme being. We must in a practical way acknowledge our dependence on Him by works of penance and self-denial. Every pang undergone for His sake is a silent acknowledgment of His divine ownership. The cross is a loud reminder of God's justice and His mercy. Rather than allow disturbed relations to continue between Himself and His creatures He submitted His only begotten and well beloved Son to torments of the most refined cruelty, to a death of the most ignominious character. He stopped at no sacrifice to show kindness to a prostrate foe, and He set us on our feet again at the expense of His divine Son's blood and life. And in the words of the Apostle we must fill up the merits of the Lord Christ by personal satisfaction. Penance is the one weapon at our disposal. Throughout life we must play the unlovely part of self-appointed executioners, and chastise these bodies of sin, bringing them by pain and self-denial under subjection to the spirit. There is no other way under Heaven of making the soul ready for that ineffable

union in force between God and His saints. Man's heart is the scene of many a battle between the flesh and the spirit. Every victory won over the flesh adds new strength to the spirit. Sin is rooted in man's desire for bodily comfort and luxury of sense. We must therefore attack our enemy in his stronghold. We must save our immortal souls at the expense of any amount of physical pain. Finally, the cross teaches us resignation, content with our lot in life, and superhuman patience in the midst of poverty and pain. And the larger half of holiness consists in laboriously trudging along in the bleeding footsteps of Christ. We must suffer, we must die. It is a law of our nature, it is the penalty of original sin, and as unavoidable as the air we breathe. Let us be no heathens; but, like true sons of God, let us accept these crosses with joy as gifts from the hands of a fond Father. Let us keep fresh on our lips in all the emergencies of life these sublimely sweet words of St. Andrew, "Good cross of Christ, that borrowed the splendor of pearls from the body of the Lord, my heart's desire, my single love, thou burden of a lifetime's longings, I hail thee prepared at last for my greedy soul."

But these tremendous favors of creation, redemption, preservation, are after all common to mankind, and their very commonness renders them less striking and impressive. To rouse all the hiding energies of our gratitude, we must count the special favors done us personally during our childhood, youth and old age. By a surpassing gift of God's goodness we were

born no heathens, pagans or heretics. Baptism ushered us into the ranks of the elect before we distinctly knew what was going on around us. Our second mother, the true Church of Christ, took us into her arms soon after birth, and from that blessed day to this she has guided our every step along the pathway of morality. If we are not ships tossed about by every wind of doctrine, the circumstance is due entirely to God's wondrous love for us. We were not denied the rare privilege of an early Catholic education. Our impressionable years were lived in surroundings conducive to faith and piety. During our school-days God was not kept in the background, religion was made no secondary consideration; and our lapses from virtue are traceable to no defective instruction. We are indebted to God for the fond parents who procured for us this boon; for the devoted father, who never tired of toil in our behalf; for the angel mother, who gave us next place to God in her heart. The delicate hand that smoothed our brow in fever, the strong arm that shielded us from surrounding dangers, were only other manifestations of our Father in Heaven. He fashioned for us that mysterious something called home, now wrapped for some of us in a haze of years, but with all its distance as dear to the heart and as fixed in the fancy as it was that summer morning long ago when we passed from its sacred portals into exile. It was the cradle of our boyhood dreams, it was the confidant of our stirring ambitions, it was the workshop where we painted skies and built castles, and

tasted the sweetness of success without any admixture of failure's bitterness.

Recall the friends who lent the sunshine of their merriment, the warmth of their child-love, to life's budding hours. Some are with the angels, others are swallowed up in the sea of separation; but their happy faces like a vision rise to people the voids of silent solitude and fill memory with regrets,—those boys and girls who romped and played with us, who loved us for ourselves, swayed by no motives of low lying selfishness, whole worlds different from the friends we meet in later life. Echoes of their whole-hearted laughter find a way back from the grave to our ears, and we can never hope to again enjoy friendship like theirs, able not only to tolerate, but to love our very faults. And these friends borrowed their attractiveness from the supreme loveliness of God. They were arguments He Himself employed to prove His eternal interest in our welfare. Each can journey back through the dead years, and rehearse with himself the many occasions on which God's vigilant care visibly interfered to keep him from harm, those hair-breadth escapes that now seem miracles, those providences we could not then, and cannot now fathom. And fresh from this survey of the magnificent blessings heaped upon us in creation, redemption, and preservation; in the gift of faith; a Catholic education, Catholic parents, a Catholic home and Catholic friends, we must, unless sadly fallen from manliness and gratitude, feel driven to the conclusion that in all fairness and in honor only one way lies open

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to us, the way of sacrifice and service. In the full light of honest common-sense and of justice, we must surrender to God in sentiments of sincerest candor everything we can call our own, our hearts, our heads, and our hands; our health, wealth and talents; our very life.

VII

GOD AND CHARITY

"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." St. James, 1, 17.

WE are done with imperfect love of God, love of God because of His favors. We now make progress to perfect love of God, love of God because of His infinite perfections. In imperfect charity we love God because He is good to us; because He created us, keeps us in life, coöperates with us in every detail, rescues us from hell, invites us to Heaven. In perfect charity we love God because He is good in Himself, all good, a veritable accumulation of amiable characteristics, without a single repellent trait. Everything less than God is a mixture of good and evil, and we never love a creature without the hiding fear that we are making a monstrous mistake, without the killing dread that soon or late we may wake up to our folly and heartily hate what we now cherish with our heart's best affection. God is a heaped up measure of good, with unending duration, and nothing this side of God shares with Him either of these two prerogatives. No created good is soul-satisfying, no created good is lasting. What a man gains in wealth, he loses in pleasure; what a man gains in pleasure, he loses in honor; what a man gains in honor, he loses in wealth

and pleasure. The miser has no time or inclination for enjoyment; the voluptuary has no time or spirit for the sharp penalties of fame; the demagogue is too busy with his constituents to practice a profession or spend a night at the play. And the wisdom of all three is practically limited to the column of stock-quotations in the morning paper, to the list of places where to dine, and to the ephemeral history of political manœuvres at Albany or Washington. Their virtue is measured by the length of their pocketbook, their god is their belly, and the throne of their tyranny is red with the life-blood of lesser rivals, and rests on the prostrate forms of helpless human slaves. Wealth vanishes, pleasure palls with use, and fame is as fickle and inconstant as its parent, the breath of the multitude. And even if the miser is spared financial disaster to the end, to die a millionaire; even if the voluptuary is keen for bodily delights to the end, to die at table or in viler surroundings; even if the demagogue holds his dearly bought honors to the end, to go out to the cemetery with a long line of friends and admirers for company; death the destroyer puts a cruel finish to all their happiness and all their hopes. Death palsies their hands, palsies their palates and palsies their ears to the acclaiming shouts of the rabble. Their money slips through their lifeless fingers; sweet and bitter are all one to the tongue of a corpse; and fame contributes no warmth to the heroes lying in long rows in the graveyard, under heaps of snow, a cold March moon, and the far away stars of a wintry sky. Even virtue, the most splendid good this earth can

boast, has its drawbacks. Temperance hurts the night before, just as intemperance hurts the morning after. Patience bows the heart with grief, just as impatience tears the soul with remorse. Hope is just a little less aggravating than despair; and self denial cuts with as sharp an edge as self gratification. The flowers that grow in the spring are no more in the autumn; and though plucked today to lend their color and fragrance to a feast, they are spurned into the street tomorrow, to be loaded with other rubbish and vile smells into the cart of the ashman. Beauty fades towards dismal decay, youth runs its swift way to old age, health is pursued and overtaken by disease. The stage has had its favorites, courts have had their beauties; there have been other Helens like her of Troy, to involve nations in whole years of war; there have been other Cleopatras, like her of Egypt, to kill ambition in other Antonys, and keep them from compassing the empire of the world; and I need hardly call your attention to the commonplace fact, that they all died, they were all buried or burned, and the world thought it hardly worth while to preserve an authentic portrait of their superbly destructive and fatal faces. Some died by poison; some, by the knife; others closed their career in the poorhouse, objects of public charity; others in madhouses, their reason dethroned by the shock of sudden transformation from semblances of human beings to semblances of crows, or witches, or worse.

Enough, I think, has been said to satisfy our minds that no created good is soul-satisfying, that

no created good is lasting. This being the case, it is eminently dangerous and eminently foolish to look for satisfaction in creatures. We are trifling with our hearts when we compel them to love whatever thing can die. We are mocking our large capacity for affection when we urge it to look for content in anything less than God. God in good sooth is the one object in the world on which we can without suspicion of disappointment fasten our faculty for loving. And all because God is a heaped up measure of good with unending duration. Possession of God leaves no desire of the heart unfulfilled, whether it be in the order of grace or in the order of nature; and no grim spectre of future loss haunts the possessor. And this is the one circumstance that makes perfect love of God possible and easy. Perfect love of God means love of God on His own account, and its basic motive is God's infinite loveliness. Apart from favors done us, God is deserving of all our love because of His infinite perfections. Had He never created us, had we sprung from that empty fiction of pagan philosophy, unmade matter; had He never redeemed, had He never lived, labored, or died for mankind, all the hearts in the world ought to be irresistibly drawn towards His loveliness for centre. What faith and reason teach concerning His attributes ought to be incentive enough to fasten on God the affections of the universe. In Heaven love of God is the only possible attitude, it is the single emotion of which the elect are capable. They enjoy no freedom in the matter, and merit is at an end. They simply have to love

God, and no reward attaches to doing what we have to do, without a vestige of choice in the thing. The very circumstance that they see God as He is constitutes this blessed state of necessity; and when the mind once feasts on the multitudinous beauty of God, the heart is denied every avenue of escape from love. Beauty is the unique cause of love. Love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. And when beauty is infinite, when beauty has no commerce with ugliness, hate is out of the question, because hate is still, till stirred by ugliness or evil. Here on earth we can at will love God or hate God; and the stubbornness of our pride, our slavery to the senses, and our mad fondness for bodily delights banned by the eternal law, make hatred of God all too easy and natural an achievement. We enjoy this fatal freedom because our eyes are held and we cannot see God as He is, we cannot see God face to face. This is our period of probation, God is making trial of our loyalty; and without full freedom to love or hate, test would be an absolute impossibility, and God's plans would be frustrated. But in Heaven all this will be changed. Heaven is no place of probation, it is a place of reward, the abode of permanent and unalloyed happiness; and with the light of God's countenance streaming down upon us, hate will become an impossibility, love will be sovereign mistress of our hearts.

There ought to be some way of making earth resemble Heaven in this respect. Of course we can never make earth Heaven. God's plans are opposed to that, and only a fool could attempt the thing. In spite of

our best endeavors, earth will forever continue a place of probation, a field for tests and trials, with God seen from afar, in a glass darkly, His beauty too obscure to invariably compel our love, His seemingly repellent features at times conspicuous enough to solicit our hate. We cannot hope to live here as secure against sin as the elect in Heaven; much as we despise our dread power to prefer evil to good, we cannot get away from or alienate our awful prerogative of freedom; and till we die we must range free agents, able to stretch out our hands to duty or treason, to virtue or vice, to Heaven or hell. There is no help for it, God wants things this way, and no good comes of quarreling with God's plans. And yet we can decidedly mend matters in this respect. Though we cannot hope to climb all the way to Heaven, we can climb nearer by persistent striving. Though we cannot hope now to enjoy that face to face presence of God, which belongs as their birthright to the elect redeemed from the earth, we can still ambition the union of mind and heart in force between God and His saints even while they sojourn in this wilderness of temptation, this valley of tears. Though the top of the mountain of God's glory is forbidden us, we are not condemned to live forever at its base, where the mists of worldliness and a haze of distractions cut the soul off from all view of the splendor beyond. The trouble with us is that we are too content with our estrangement from God to make the effort needed to get closer. We are too unfamiliar with the bliss inundating and flooding a saint's soul in virtue of uninterrupted union

with God, to stir ourselves for its acquisition. Desire is the measure of endeavor, and desire is intensest only when the good thing in question is thoroughly missed, and the mind is wide awake to its value. If the elect in Heaven are incapable of sin simply because they see God face to face, if saints on earth seldom or never fall simply because the mirror in which they see God is polished and bright; there is no denying the fact that our mediocrity in virtue is due entirely to the circumstance that we see God darkly in a mirror too dim with dust, too daubed with streaks to reflect in any but an imperfect way the surpassing splendor of God's supreme loveliness. Therefore we must submit our mirrors to a cleansing process. We must remove from them every particle of dust, wash them clean of streaks, and strive without ceasing towards a fuller and fuller appreciation of God's wondrous attributes. The one effective way to compass perfect love of God is to study Him in His portraits or images, the myriad wonders of creation, in the physical order and the moral order, in the world of thought and the world of sense. To put on the dispositions of the elect, to slip into love's sweet bondage, we must take a nearer view of God, we must borrow from the open book of creation larger and larger notions of His limitless perfections. We must see every good gift coming down from the Father of lights. In the words of St. James, "Every best gift, every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change or shadow of alteration." 1, 17.

Hitherto God's gifts have been diverted from their proper uses. They were meant to publish their Maker's praises, and they have on no few occasions contributed to our shame and to God's displeasure. Every gift of God we touch we spoil. He gave us eyes for the enjoyment of color and shape, with a view to our easy passage from sights provocative of delight in the vision to the artist in Heaven, who colors the leaves in autumn and gives whatsoever creature all its beauty and all its power to please the senses. He gave us ears for the enjoyment of sound, with a view to our easy passage from the melody and harmony of earth to the Grand Musician, who gave creatures the art needed to elicit most wondrous music from most unpromising material. And when we use an eye or an ear for mere enjoyment, without a thought of its artificer, we are only a little better than dumb animals, and are missing opportunities to grow in the knowledge and love of God. We lend our eyes to objects that provoke images suggestive of sin. Our eyes are our accusers at Confession, and the things we see, instead of raising our minds to God, drag them down at times to abominably low levels. The cross is not carved on every pretty forehead we pass, and thought is right only when full of the cross and of Him who died on it for our redemption. We hear with pleasure what ought to affect our ears with pain. For ears touched with the grace of God there is no music in detraction, calumny, slander; in mockery, fault-finding and unkindness. We must school our senses to perceive God at every turn, everywhere and in everything. We must school

our mind to think always of God, hearing a sermon in running brooks and deriving lessons of virtue from the most commonplace occurrences of everyday life. We must make St. Patrick's Lorica or Breastplate our own. "Christ in front of me, Christ behind me; Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me; Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me, Christ in every tongue that speaks to me." It is hard to miss God in creation, His beauty is writ large across every leaf in the book of nature, and it cannot fail to arrest and hold the attention of the earnest and devout soul.

He is the sun planted at the head of our universe. Created perfections, like the gladiator's might, the judge's wisdom, the virgin's modesty, are rays let down to warm the world with God's own warmth. They are streams issuing from God for fountain-head and source. All are dependent on God for existence and continuance in being. Following philosophy's doctrine of the possibles, all are modeled after ideas eternally resident in the divine mind. He is the architect of the universe, and its myriad beauties existed beforehand in His capacious thoughts. Effects preëxist in their causes. No one gives but what he first possesses. The house had never graced the landscape, were the builder's mind empty of plans. This universe of beauty is the house, God is the builder. Archetypes, models of all, existed first in Him. Everything created is an image of God's perfections. The infinite can never be completely imaged in the finite; but like ourselves, when constrained by a vast idea to use an abundance of words for its portrayal, God has set forth His beauty in words or

creatures so numerous that we cannot begin to count them. There are the sunrise and the sunset, the moonlight and the clouds. There is the orderly march of the seasons, the soft breath of spring, the golden radiance of summer, red ripe autumn, and winter's silvery cold. There is the beneficent wisdom manifest in their gradual passage from one season to another. There are the mountains, rivers and forests; the hingeless ocean lashed and still. There are the arts, eloquence, poetry, painting with angels from the wizard hand of Doré; music with all its powers to soothe and rouse; that voice from spirit-land, able to make men forget death and the shock of battle, able to lead a fretful child into the silent land of sleep. There are all the charms of life's varying stages, the simplicity of childhood, the activity of youth, the steadfastness of man and woman, the peace and content of old age. There are the beautiful faces of friends we love, the depth of their fondness betrayed in a squeeze of the hand, a tremor in the voice; a mother's double kiss at parting; a father's silent devotedness, the lines of toil in his rough hand symbols of love for his children. All these glories must be in God, the archetypes or models, according to which He fashioned them. And the pity of the thing now is that we cannot see God face to face, cannot see Him as He is, with all these resplendent perfections shining in His countenance. The loveliness of honesty, justice, holiness, sacrifice; the charms of poetry, eloquence; everything is there. But we can see them only darkly, in the mirror held up to us by philosophy and faith. And we are at small pains to

keep the mirror clean. The clean of heart see God in a way denied others; and our hearts are marked with a thousand outside cares, our hearts are crossed with a thousand foreign and worse than useless loves. The single or simple eye sees God; and we miss Him whole hours, whole days at a time, because our vision is smeared with other and unworthy images. And He is withal so close to us. His eyes are upon us. His arms are around us. His breath is on our cheeks. We are resting our heads on His bosom; and we can hear in the mighty voice of nature every throb of His big heart. Why then cleave to anything less than Almighty God? Considered in Himself He is worthy of our undivided affection. We are fools and worse to let creatures engage our attention, and sin is just such folly. We are not ourselves above the temptation. All our past history is scattered with intervals of folly. Conscience denounces us in no measured terms, and sober study of the dead years can sicken us with remorse. We have repeatedly turned our backs on God to take up with creatures. We have broken our rules to please a friend, to save ourselves discomfort; we have broken our vows, to give and take trifles, to enjoy forbidden delights, to escape the bitterness of religious servitude; we have broken this, that and the other commandment to minister to our pride, or pleasure or selfishness. And all the while we were abandoning the God of infinite beauty for creatures attractive indeed in our eyes, in themselves extremely repulsive. Like Pilate of old we were standing with Cæsar as against Christ, we were delivering God up to His en-

emies. It is high time we laid aside our folly. Hitherto the small good resident in creatures has led us astray. It has whispered our heart no hint of the infinite beauty it was meant to image, it has blinded us to the presence of ugly and repellent evil in creatures. In God we have the one object in which our faculty for loving can rest and find satisfaction. Viewing God therefore as limitless perfection, power, beauty, justice, let us make that act of consecration, that act of purest love, love of God on account of His infinite self. "Take, O Lord, and receive my liberty of action, my memory, my mind, and my will. Whatever I have, whatever I hold, I have and hold from Thy bountiful goodness. I give everything back to thee, I put everything at the disposal of Thy beneficent will. Leave me only Thy love and Thy grace. With them, though stripped naked of everything else, I am rich enough. I honestly want nothing besides."

VIII

CHARITY AND THE NEIGHBOR

"He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." Romans, 13, 8.

"THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." St. Matthew 22, 57. Charity then has two departments, love of God and love of the neighbor. We have been a long while busy with love of God, and are determined with the help of grace to grow in fondness for our supremest friend, and finish with that perfect love, peculiar and proper to the elect in Heaven, imitated by the saints on earth, captives, slaves to His infinite beauty, ready and alert by virtue of unbroken union to detect His presence in whatever attractive object appeals to our senses, our minds, our hearts. And now we make progress to love of neighbor, another wide field for study, full of promise for future improvement as well as present remorse. And first I notice that in the text set at the head of our discourse Christ reduces all morality, all the law and all the prophets, to two commandments, love of God and love

of neighbor. They are a summary of the ten commandments Moses brought down from the top of Sinai on two tables of stone. Man's duties towards God were written on the first table, his duties towards the neighbor were written on the second. The first three of the Ten Commandments set forth his duties towards God, adoration, reverence for His holy name, and observance of the Sabbath. The other seven have to do with man's duties towards his neighbor, ordering obedience to parents, forbidding murder, impurity, theft, false-witness, lustful thoughts and greedy desires. We cannot of course pause to explain the Ten Commandments. The limited time at our disposal urges us to hurry. Enough to remark in passing that God as our creator insists on adoration, the highest possible tribute at the hands of a rational creature, to show His ownership; on reverence for His holy name, to impress men with an overwhelming sense of the awful majesty attaching to His Sacred person; and on the Sabbath's observance, to make it impossible for men to forget Him longer than a week at a time. His fourth commandment secures order in the family, and everything human has its origin and start in the home. Men's passions are morality's capital and chiefest enemies. Philosophy divides these passions into irascible and concupiscible, into hate and love. The fifth commandment keeps hatred in check by forbidding whatever wrong emotions lead up to and culminate in murder. Inordinate love or concupiscence is most stirred by pleasure, by wealth, and by honor. Sinners desire their neighbor's body for purposes of pleasure, and this

passion degenerates to impurity, subject matter of the sixth commandment. Sinners desire their neighbor's goods for purposes of greed, and this passion degenerates to stealing, forbidden by the seventh commandment. Sinners plot harm to their neighbor's fame and reputation to see their own renown grow, and the passion degenerates to false-witness, legislated against by the eighth commandment. The ninth and tenth commandments are fuller explanations of the sixth and seventh; and they would seem to deserve the honor because of the supreme difficulty they offer human nature. But all this catechism about the commandments is little to our present purpose. We now wish merely to insist upon the important place love of neighbor holds in God's code of morality for the world, betokened by the circumstance that Christ, when legislating for mankind, gave first place in His thoughts to love of God; second place, to love of neighbor. He gave no place in His thoughts to love of self, except as a measure or standard for love of the neighbor. We need not be urged to love ourselves, we are quick enough in that respect. It would be waste of good law, to formulate a statute with self-love for substance. Instinct takes care of that, and the inclination needs to be repressed, not encouraged. Deny yourself, take up your cross, mortify the flesh; these are some of the laws established by Christ with a bearing on self love; and they sound more like an invitation to hate self than otherwise. In fact we are so headlong to love self, so set on our own prosperity, that the command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, is only another visible display of

God's infinite wisdom. God Himself could hardly hit on a standard or measure with which we are better acquainted, or a more arduous standard.

As matters now stand, love of our neighbor has very broad limits in which to exercise itself. God wants us to love him as we love ourselves. Self-love or selfishness is the standard of measurement in this matter. And as every child of Adam is afflicted with this disease of selfishness, he knows without mistake to what lengths he must go, to satisfy God's wishes. We all love ourselves, and we love ourselves intensely. We are born that way, and there is no help for it. When held under water, we struggle violently for air; when in danger of falling, we grasp frantically at anything within reach; when threatened with a blow, our hands instinctively assume a position of defense. Self-love is really an instinct with us, and it abandons us in no emergency. We have an excuse ready for our most inexcusable doings. We have a word of cheer for ourselves, when the whole world would like to chase us to the desert with a frown. In our thoughts we dress up our crimes in the garb of virtue, and wonder why others fail to see in us the pretty things we see in ourselves. We lavish patience on ourselves in every disappointing thing we do. We are kind to ourselves, no matter how much some of our follies move us to anger. We must then apply this same rule to our neighbor's conduct, and excuse where excuse is without a shadow of foundation. We must cheer a brother already fallen, and after helping him to his feet, give him a push in the right direction. We must clothe his faults with the

mantle of charity, and must enter into a solemn compact with ourselves to be patient with him when most provoked, to be kind to him when most unkindly dealt with and most unjustly treated. "Charity is patient, charity is kind." I Cor. 13, 4.

In God's own estimation, and He is an eminently correct judge of things, love of neighbor comes right next to love of God. In the words of St. Paul, "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." Rom. 13, 8. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Gal. 5, 14. The two commandments stand or fall together. We cannot love God as He deserves to be loved, unless we love His friends, and God's friends are the neighbor. We cannot love our neighbors as God would have us love them, unless we first love God. "We must strip self of all love for creatures, fusing love for them into love for their Creator, loving Him in all creatures and them all in Him, according to His most holy and divine will." And this is the secret of loving God with our whole heart, the secret that enables a truly Christian mother to love her child without detriment to God's glory, the secret that enables a friend to love his friend without suspicion of the shame attaching to modern idolatry, the worship of humanity to the utter exclusion of God and religion from the emotion. This is an age of philanthropy. Homes are being reared all round us for the homeless, libraries are being built for the poor scholar, means are being distributed with a lavish hand to the destitute. But a good deal of the philanthropy of today is counterfeit and hollow. It has not the

genuine ring of God's approval, that rested like a blessing on works of charity done in good old Catholic times, when monks and nuns fed the bodies of God's poor at the gates of the monasteries, and at the same time ministered to their famished souls the bread of faith that nourishes unto eternal life. The enemy of souls is the moving spirit of many a beneficent scheme on foot today, and his tools are dupes, who culpably imagine that a warm bed in winter, a cool breeze in summer, and a satisfied appetite all the year round, are the centre and summit of human happiness and contentment. Accursed the hand that saves an orphan from starvation, only to rob the orphan's mind of belief in the existence of God. The coin that goes to purchasing bread for the purpose of blasting a child's instinctive dread of hell was minted in the lower regions; and the man or woman, who under the guise of benevolent humaneness stamps out of a human heart faith in a hereafter, and chills a human heart's ardor in the pursuit of virtue, is doing the work of Satan, and will have for reward the inheritance of the damned. The teachers who, in spite of every day experience and the plain dictates of common-sense, profess to think that mere cultivation of the intellect, without regard to training of the heart, constitutes education; and that a man ascends in the scale of citizenship, the farther he recedes from his Creator, and the more thoroughly he forgets his moral obligations towards the Creator, are teaching a doctrine of devils, and will reap for their unfortunate country the direst of disasters. Love of man, not founded on love of God, is time wasted, and

can be likened to nothing more aptly than to a scrap of meat thrown a hungry dog. The one act is just as purely natural as the other, and deeds of that sort are not coin current in the Kingdom of God. There is, however, no disguising this other fact, that love of God, to bear fruit, must be accompanied by love of man. Indeed, love of God and hatred of man are a contradiction. The one cannot subsist with the other; and the person bent on loving God cannot take a step forward, unless he first sweeps from all the corners of his heart whatever feelings of rancor and hate he cherished against his neighbor. St. John, the apostle and theologian of love, is authority for this statement, and his words are unequivocal. He writes in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle, "If any man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

Charity is one of the three theological virtues, and no virtue is theological unless it has God for object and motive. Charity touches the neighbor as well as God, and under both aspects it must be theological. The only way to make charity theological when it touches the neighbor is to love God in the neighbor, the neighbor in God. We must therefore regard the neighbor as God's vicar or representative in this matter of charity. God must be the hungry we give to eat, the thirsty we give to drink, the stranger we take in, the naked we cover, the sick and the imprisoned we visit. St. Matthew, 23, 35. By a merciful providence of God men and women are now substitutes for God in this business of charity. Love of neighbor is love of God made easy, and we can never thank God sufficiently for

the favor. The sea of separation between God and ourselves makes it difficult to keep always in close touch with God, and love always suffers when the person we love is away. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, is only half the truth. The whole truth demands an addition, making the expression read, distance makes the heart grow fonder of the other fellow. Everything else equal, it is easier to love a person we see often than a person we seldom meet. St. John in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle gives utterance to the same thought, "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" I John 4, 20. In spite of the fact that temptation never leaves us without abundant opportunity to manifest our love for God, it still remains true that God's sweet countenance is a world's journey distant from us; and we are by force of nature and habit inclined to forget friends separated from us a comparatively short length of time. "Out of sight, out of mind," is an old adage, and a true one; and new friends usurp places in our affections we once thought sacredly sealed against all comers. On just this account, perhaps, God has surrounded us on all sides with beings like ourselves, beings made to His image and likeness, and commanded us by a second law to love them as we love ourselves. The whole world is my neighbor, the world redeemed and loved unto death by Jesus. And if I pretend at all to love Jesus, I must love His friends. I must love the family He set here on earth to make itself ready for final summons to eternal happiness in Heaven. And mankind is that family. Of course there are degrees

of relationship between the members of this vast family, and God wants us to respect these degrees in distributing the warmth of our affection. Our first duty is towards the members of our own community; and the religious who entertains unkindness or bitterness towards a brother, banded with him in the holy cause of God's glory, has a heart unfit to love others, and sure for want of God's blessing to go wrong when on quests for friendship outside the monastery. And while on this topic of love in the family, and love in the cloister, let me remark that we religious can learn lessons in the matter of charity from the love current among brothers and sisters in the world. At the close of the Last Supper, with Judas gone, farewells were in order, and Jesus took leave of His disciples in a few well-chosen words of exhortation to mutual love and charity. "Little children, love one another, as I have loved you." St. John, 13, 33. Holy Communion makes Christendom one large family. It ought to make men in religion real brothers, it ought to make women in religion real sisters. And say what you will, the love in vogue among brothers and sisters is a thousand times intenser than the love current among mere friends. Selfishness never poisons a sister's affection, and brothers are devoted to one another. Friends keep an eye forward to their own advantage, and friendships are made on this basis. Blood tells, blood is thicker than water; and it is well nigh impossible for grace to rival nature in this respect, and enable us to feel towards the brothers and sisters religion gives us as we feel towards the brothers and sisters we left at home.

And yet we must ever labor towards reducing this fiction of piety to a blessed reality. More of the human ought to enter into our love for one another. Human love, especially such as flourishes among brothers and sisters, is a thing sublime, and it has characteristics able to make the loves of religious truer, grander and sturdier, less open to harassing suspicions of deceit, and warm with the glow of honesty. Fraternal charity is a cold term, and not at all provocative of the emotions awakened by mention of the word love. Fraternal charity often begins and ends with the agreement to observe armed neutrality, and all its demands seem satisfied, when parties to the transaction refrain from doing positive harm to one another. Love is always busy to procure the advantage of its object. Harm is so far from its thoughts that it would rather die than see the person loved suffer hurt or pain. We must love our brothers and sisters in religion as Christ loved and loves us.

The companionship of my neighbor may seem less desirable than solitude, his talk may be a constant incentive to fury, his temperament may be something horrid beyond the telling; and yet it is my bounden duty, a duty imposed on me by the God of wisdom, to love him as I love myself. My heart is shaped to love only what is beautiful, true and good. From a very necessity of nature I feel free to love only what is lovable. How then can I love some of the persons God's sweet will has made my brothers in religion? How can they find it in their hearts to love me with all my cranks, idiosyncrasies and meannesses? Ah, well;

the question can be best answered by asking another. How can God love the sinner? How can God love the wretch who lies awake at night planning methods to destroy God's Kingdom in the hearts of men, and pull God off the throne of the universe? How can God love the sinner? Why, easily. He closes His eyes to the unlovely traits in the sinner's character, and concentrates his attention on the simple circumstance that the sinner is the child of His tears, an exact reproduction of His own image, the captive ransomed by His divine Son's precious blood, a possible inhabitant of Heaven. God hates sin with an eternal hate, He loves the sinner with a patient and enduring love. Like God, Our Lord and Master, we must see beyond the disagreeable features in our neighbor's character and disposition. We must find in him and love the image of God. That image may be faint and covered over with a thick coating of sin. But it is there; and no amount of iniquity can quite destroy it. This is what we call loving God in our neighbor, and the process is at the same time a deed of charity and an act of faith. It would be silly waste of time to endeavor to cultivate a fondness for his companionship as such, for his talk as such, for his temperament as such. One might just as well try to cultivate a taste for bitter roots or deadly poison. The nature of love is opposed to every such attempt. We can be patient with his defects and frailties, we can by constant practice in the school of self-denial come to take no notice of them; but we cannot love them, and no law of God obliges us to do so.

IX

CHARITY AND THE NEIGHBOR

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Psalms, 132, 1.

THIS saying of the Psalmist, as terse as it is beautiful, is God’s own tribute to the excellence of love for the neighbor. To dwell together in unity is sum and substance of charity, and the convent knows no higher good, no intenser pleasure, no more efficacious means for the consummation of complete happiness. Good prompts desire, desire in turn prompts activity; and so it happens that whatever we say, think, or do, is said, thought, or done with a view to securing some good we promise ourselves. Whatever contributes in any way to my perfection is a good for me, whatever can make me better than I was before its acquisition, is able to start me wishing; and so we propose to arouse within ourselves an enthusiasm for the virtue of charity, or love for the neighbor, by a close study of the good it contains. Good is threefold, becoming, agreeable and useful; and love of neighbor is all three.

Becoming good is best described as whatever helps perfect the rational side of my nature, whatever addition is in harmony with right reason, whatever new quality makes me more a man than I was without it. And love of the neighbor is all that. Love of my neigh-

bor when God is its motive, love of my neighbor when my neighbor is an enemy, has little in common with the animal side of my nature. The animal within me has small reverence for God, the animal within me clamors for the death of my enemy. Love of my neighbor, while provocative of supremest spiritual pleasure, is oftener than not a thorn in the side of poor human nature, iron in the heart, and an oppressive weight on the body. Love is labor, love is pain; and the man in earnest about loving his neighbor must enter on the work in a penitential spirit, determined to meet with sore discomfort at every step in his progress. All through history pain is never absent from the side of love, and the near presence of pain kills suspicion about love's quality. When love of the neighbor flatters our senses, when it sits smiling to our hearts, when it stirs pleasurable feelings in every fibre of our being, the emotion is dangerously like self-love, there is need of caution, and in what measure it falls away from the spiritual, in that measure it is open to criticism and blame. Charity in this case degenerates to particular friendship, and every young religious knows what a harvest of trouble particular friendships can grow.

And love of neighbor is eminently in harmony with right reason, it is a prescription of nature, and the single attitude counselled by common-sense. To hate a friend is against all rule of kind, it is the madness of a disordered mind; and to hate an enemy is only a little less foolish, when we reflect on the large harm the silly process works ourselves, and the small hurt it does our enemy. Instead of hating an enemy, we must, if we

want to be philosophers, love him to the extent of praying God in Heaven to forgive him. It is the lesson written all over the first of the dying Saviour's Seven Last Words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus with His cross for pulpit thought no virtue worthier of first place in His sermon than this spirit of forgiveness. We are all sons of the one Father, and our elder brother Christ wants us to be separated from the rest of mankind by this line of mutual love. To rob us of all excuse for hatred based on wrongs done us, He in His dying hour forgave, asked God in Heaven to forgive demons, whose hands were red with His adorable blood. We are fools to say the Our Father when our hearts are captive to hatred of an enemy. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," is in these circumstances no petition for mercy, but an insane request for the curse of God's condemnation; and if God took us at our word, He would smite our head from our shoulders where we knelt. We covet our enemy's death, and we pray God to accord us the same measure of mercy. In fact God will have no gift at our hands, if our heart is at odds with our neighbor. When at the foot of the altar memory of some difference with a brother occurs to mind, "we must leave the altar, and go first to be reconciled to our brother." St. Matthew, 5, 23. We must meet the night with a soul free from all suspicion of rancor and hate. "Let not the sun go down on your anger." Eph. 4, 26. Everywhere in Scripture the wisdom of God denounces in severest terms the folly of hatred, and we cannot be

far wrong when we proclaim love of the neighbor, friend and enemy alike, most convincing evidence of a heart in tight accord with reason. "Ira, brevis furor," is old Horace's vivid way of expressing the same truth. Every fit of anger is a brief interval of madness.

Charity therefore is the manliest of virtues, and this quality of charity is most conspicuous in love of an enemy. Hatred is the employment of demons, love is the eternal occupation of angels; and the farther we get from the demons, the closer we get to the angels, the nearer we draw to the type of men and women God wants, the world admires, and life in religion demands as a most precious need. In spite of the old saying, "To err is human; to forgive, divine," history is witness that your true man is quicker even to forgive than he is to make a mistake. Charity is badge of a higher manhood than paganism ever knew. The world had to wait for the advent of Christ to learn this sublime lesson. "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another as I have loved you." St. John, 13, 34. The pagans loved their friends, hated their enemies. Christians, in imitation of Christ, who died for saint and sinner, love friend and enemy alike. To love a friend, is easy; to love an enemy is hard, so hard that only the grace of God can enable us to stand with a stout heart to duty. Love of a friend is no unerring sign of towering moral strength, pagans are equal to its small heroism, and they are weaklings in morality. Love of an enemy betokens the giant, vested with some of God's own omnipotent pity, it means prior conquest of self, it means contempt of revenge, the passion rank-

ing right next to man's instinct for self-preservation. The man who pardons is all but a martyr, all but a patriot, dead in the service of God or country. He hardly submits to the pain of killing, but he submits to the perhaps more poignant pang attaching to an un-avenged insult or wrong. Love of a friend is so entirely human, it is so much in line with the promptings of nature, that pleasure is its inseparable companion, and it perhaps ministers more delight to the lover than to the friend. Love of an enemy is cold comfort to self, it is pure love of the neighbor without any admixture of selfishness, it is magnanimity pushed to the extreme of securing another's good at the expense of our own discomfort and annoyance. It is divine, because God on the cross was the first preacher in history to insist on the virtue, and the philosophers of the ages altogether missed its moral worth and beauty. It is surpassingly more meritorious than love of a friend, because the pain a favor costs us always measures the reward it deserves. The man who pardons is a bigger man and a better man than his fellows, because he borrows grandeur from the nobility of God. Bulwer Lytton somewhere in one of his novels draws a sharp contrast between a stricken deer in the herd and a man in society overtaken by disaster. Brutes never see beyond the senses, in the eyes of his mates a wounded deer is past value, and with the utmost unconcern they let him wander alone to the shade to die of abandonment. But men have minds in addition to senses, disaster never quite robs its victim of his dignity, and his neighbors pursue him with affection to the end, lending his

last moments the comfort of their encouraging presence. The love one man bears another is therefore rooted in his possession of reason, and every act of kindness, because a development of reason, encourages the angel within us, fattens the spirit at the expense of the flesh. The man able to hate his brother is lower fallen in the scale of feeling than the very brute. Animals love their own kind. Horace insists on this truth with his countrymen to bring home to their minds the degradation of civil war, the woful spectacle of Roman butchering Roman in pitched battle. Lions never as a rule attack lions, their quarrels are with beasts of other species, with tigers, leopards, hyenas and the rest. But civil war means brother arrayed against brother; and the jungle is a stranger to such ferocity. How the shame of the thing grows when we transfer the question from the world to the monastery or the convent! If the sight of two contending Romans stirred disgust in the poet, and inspired some of the most indignant verses he ever wrote, what I wonder, would be his sentiments if confronted with the sadder picture of two brothers in religion, two sisters in the convent, dwelling apart in hatred and enmity!

After all, the world outside is packed with pretty contemptible characters, and it is at times hard to blame honest men and honest women for losing patience with the mean, low-down curs they meet in daily life. But in religion things are quite different. The brothers and sisters religion gives us are heroes and heroines all. They are the cream of the world, the pick of the parish, conspicuous for their holiness in the Church of God's

Saints. A look down the refectory at meal-time, a glance through the chapel at morning-prayer can satisfy us that we keep company with the nobility of God. No matter their faults, no matter their weaknesses, they are heroes still; men and women, able, when life was young, and life's joys were most alluring, to turn their backs for God's sweet sake on a world so full of attractions that to escape its charms we must walk its streets with eyes on the ground. Their small faults, their petty weaknesses weigh little against their heroism; and the sister able to fasten her attention on a sister's lesser offenses, able to allow trivial blemishes in her sister's character to blind her to the grandeur of that sister's vocation, is narrow beyond the telling, is impervious to the sublime, and altogether incapable of enthusiasm.

And your sisters in religion need all the affection you can spare them; you need be no misers in the matter. God is the one person there is danger of defrauding, this danger disappears when you love your sister for God's sake, and every other way of loving your sister is absolutely forbidden by religion, and solemnly condemned by a law of the Most High. How mean a thing it is to give to outsiders the love for which your sisters yearn and to which they have a sacred right; and quests for friendship outside the convent-walls are usually attended with disaster. Their rule of life forbids them to look elsewhere for the satisfaction of an entirely legitimate craving, a return of love for love, and if denied the favor their lives are burdened with one more unnecessary grief. We are not gods, we are

not self-sufficient; and we need friends, we need kindred hearts able and willing to share our joys and share our sorrows. Man's happiness is little worth unless it affects others, and misfortune is overwhelming when it smites a victim devoid of every outside help. "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up." Eccles. 4, 13. And the sister who refuses a sister her fullest affection is guilty of thoughtlessness and inhuman cruelty, condemning a soul to that abandonment so pitifully described in the passage just cited.

A sister helped by a sister is just as strong a city as a brother helped by a brother. Prov. 18, 19. And mutual charity is a barrier shielding fond hearts from dangerous and annoying surprises at the hands of the enemy. We are "an army in battle array." Cant. 6, 3. Our foes are the world, the flesh and the devil; and they cannot withstand us if we hold together. We must close ranks, and fight ahead. There must be no break in the line in our neighborhood. We must keep step and march in the same direction. When an army in a panic becomes a mob without a leader, it is easily cut to pieces. And a convent without charity is a disordered mob and no army. Somebody is out of step, somebody is walking backward or sidewise, and confusion reigns supreme. The solidarity procured by charity atones for the weakness of individuals in religion's army. United we stand, divided we fall. Weak cords, when properly woven together, can make a strong rope. In the words of Scripture, "If a man prevail against one, two shall withstand him; a three-

fold cord is not easily broken." Eccles. 4, 12. Where charity is the order of the day, the strength of one is as the strength of a hundred.

Love of neighbor is therefore most reasonable, most pleasurable and most helpful. It is good in all three senses of the word, and its quality of goodness ought to commend it to our enthusiastic notice. And the quality grows in grandeur when charity has play within the walls of the monastery or convent, when under its benign influence brothers and sisters dwell together in unity. Charity in the world is a most appealing virtue, in religion it has charms it never assumes elsewhere. Love in the world is a sordid sort of thing as compared with love in the cloister. The hurly-burly of business, the casualties of everyday life, the strain of competition and a thousand other such details unfit hearts in the world for the tender emotions religion encourages, and the motives urging members of the same community to love one another are more compelling than the tenderness, which prompted the Samaritan in the gospel-story to bind the wounds of the man, who fell among robbers on his way down to Jericho. Religion vests love with a nobility all its own, enabling it to finish in likeness of soul, when love in the world can aspire to nothing higher than likeness in body. And St. Paul is sounding charity's chiefest praise, when he calls it, "the bond of perfection." Coloss. 3, 14. It ties its owner to holiness, and the heart proof against its invitation to struggle towards sanctity is hardly human. Poverty wears a repulsive shape, chastity is not without its disagreeable features, and obedience

must forever continue a species of martyrdom; but charity is full of enticing allurements, vesting its dispenser with divinity, its recipient with gladness, and exciting its witness to a degree of admiration provoked by no other single agency in the world. The love current among sisters in a community has attracted souls without number to the convent, making their home a veritable house of God and a gate of Heaven; and the miracle wrought when the kindness of a Christian city in the East changed Pacomius the Roman legionary from a pagan to a saint, is a matter of everyday occurrence.

And charity is a stranger to tight notions, it is as wide as the sea. Charity is more than mere justice. Justice gives everybody his due; and, if it leans at all, it leans towards severity. Charity leans toward leniency, and glories in its dishonesty. It gives to everybody more than his due in the matter of praise, less than his due in the matter of blame. It is a species of divine injustice mercifully meant to correct the short-sighted justice of men. Like mercy the quality of charity is not strained, and it has almighty power to almost make wrong right. Under its magic touch flattery of a friend becomes a virtue, opportune blindness in a superior becomes zealous vigilance, the pusillanimity of obedience in a subject becomes splendid heroism, and among equals slavery becomes a species of royalty and kingship. Patient forbearance with a subject's follies, sincere encouragement of a subject's feeble efforts are perhaps the most conspicuous traits of charity in a superior. In a subject whole-souled

obedience and the sufferance of seeming wrongs are charity's crowning glory. Between sister and sister mutual help would seem to be the highest tribute charity can exact. And when superiors are right with their subjects, when subjects are right with their superiors, when each sister in community is right with every other sister, then the whole convent is dwelling together in unity, then the whole convent is a good and pleasant thing to behold.

X

CHARITY AND SUPERIORS

"I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." St. Luke, 22, 27.

EVERY convent is a little republic, with its ruler and its citizens; its superior, its subjects and its equals; and God plays large enough part in its government to make it theocratic. The superior is God's vicar, and this is a kind of article of faith with religious; subjects are angels and ministering spirits in the kingdom, meant to accomplish God's wishes manifest in the orders issuing from authority; equals are brothers and sisters stamped with the image of a common Father, heroes and heroines in the service of God, segregated from the world like Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth, or the first Christian Community gathered in the upper room at Jerusalem. And charity can make of every convent an ideal republic, good and pleasant to behold, blessed with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of friction, all keeping step, all marching in the same direction, the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Charity has its own proper and peculiar functions in superior, subjects and equals. We closed a prior talk with a brief enumeration of these functions; and you will pardon our return to the subject. The statement then made is too full of les-

sons to be thus summarily dismissed; and, if our talks on charity are going to bear fruit at all, we must descend to particulars and get down to practice. We said, if you remember, that patient forbearance with a subject's follies and sincere encouragement of a subject's feeble efforts are perhaps the most conspicuous traits of charity in a superior. In a subject whole-hearted obedience and the sufferance of seeming wrongs are charity's crowning glory. Between sister and sister mutual help would seem to be the highest tribute charity exacts.

Superiors, then, and subjects, and equals are our topic; and we view them under the soft light of charity. Subjects and equals are easy to handle. I am one of them myself, one of the common people; and when the speaker scolds himself as well as his listeners, nobody has reason to complain. Therefore, I feel free to touch the question of subjects and equals with a bolder and more unsparing hand. But superiors are different. They are God's vicars, and I hardly know how to blame them without blaming God. If he who quarrels with the imperfections of men, censures God, he is thrice wicked who quarrels with the imperfections of superiors. And yet no harm attaches to the process of finding fault with the neighbor, when, while condemning what is reprehensible in his conduct, we are careful to entertain only the kindest of feelings towards the culprit himself. All the mistake in this matter lies in confounding the man with his faults, and visiting on his person hatred that belongs to his acts, separable as accidents from his person. Even

superiors have faults, even superiors go wide of charity and justice in their dealings with their subjects. The Pope himself is infallible on certain solemn occasions; in no sense of the word is he impeccable; and saints fall seven times. Proverbs, 24, 16. Therefore, it would be quite within our province to discuss the conduct of superiors, and hale them before the tribunal of faith and reason. But personally we have no heart for the thing, and we prefer to meet the difficulty by marching around it. Omitting all past and present superiors, we mean to talk about future superiors, those of you destined in God's sweet providence to rule this, that, or another convent. Past superiors are with God, and with a plea for pity we commend them to God's mercy. Present superiors are doing their best, and it would be presumptuous on our part to criticise their conduct. But future superiors are only beings of the imagination; and no live person is hurt when we chide or blame them.

A superior actuated by charity is conspicuous for patient forbearance and a lavish use of judicial and timely encouragement. Anything like pride, or mediocrity in virtue, or harshness, or cruelty, or indifference to the common welfare, can thoroughly discredit a superior with subjects and altogether nullify his best efforts. And first of all, superiors have small reason to feel proud. In the Holy Family superiority was in inverse order with dignity. Joseph, the least worthy of the three, was in command, Mary took orders from him, and Jesus obeyed both. Subjects therefore hold the position occupied by Jesus, and they

ought to rejoice in the distinction. Like Joseph, every superior is meant to be a servant, provider and guide; and it would seem that, by way of recompense for the trouble, God orders inferiors to pay him the homage of respect, love and obedience. This homage is but a small return for the infinite labor it costs. In his capacity of servant the superior must provide necessities and then direct with a firm hand. Both duties are equally essential. He must shield his subjects from harm by urging observance of rule. In this matter example is better than precept. A high degree of virtue is a kindness superiors owe their subjects. Because subjects are in conscience bound to consider him God's representative, the superior is in conscience bound to wear as far as possible the characteristic attributes of God. It must be his ambition to lighten their burden of faith and by personal holiness make it easy for subjects to see God in him. God crushes not the broken reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. He binds up wounds, and furnishes fuel to the spark of imperfect love by wholesale encouragement.

The Good Shepherd is the good superior's model. The superior's flock is her community; and, whether by severe measures or mild, her one duty is to lead the sheep and the lambs to God. Wo to that superior who from whatsoever wrong motive stands between a subject and Heaven. Wo to that superior who with the headlong harshness of false zeal crushes the heart that with Christ-like kindness could have been saved to virtue, and spared unnecessary bitterness. The sheep she has to tend are not dumb animals, that can be

driven at pleasure, open to correction through the single agency of pain, and universally amenable to persuasive kindness. They are human beings, with minds of their own, with wills of their own; with views that must be taken into account, even if not respected; with tastes and inclinations that cannot be altogether neglected in their management and direction. In this business of guidance her sheep are a harder problem than sheep in the meadow. They are slaves to no good instincts implanted in their bosoms by a beneficent Maker, and are quite able to disregard every salutary prompting. They are free, equipped indeed with reason, but cursed in their very origin with a leaning toward evil. They must be led, not dragged or driven. The successful superior studies her charges, gets down to their level, and makes due allowance for their manifold weaknesses. She has an infinite store of patience with their small and large faults. She chooses her times and occasions. She applies remedies calculated to cure, not to kill her patients.

God's patience with the sinner is as long as eternity, and the superior's patience with her subjects must be only a little shorter. The parable of the seed and the sower ought to be forever fresh in her memory. Hearts are the field and God is the Sower; and wherever a human heart beats, as long as the God of eternity lives, the seed shall continue to be scattered, and the parable shall go on being acted, till the Angel of death lays aside his sickle and not a blade of wheat remains to be reaped. And oh, the pathos buried in the thought, the melancholy hidden in the ugly heap of

wayside hearts, and rocky hearts, and hearts of thorns, that the mercifully omnipotent sower has for harvest and wages of His pain! Remember God has been sowing since the dawn of time. He was up and at work early in the morning. He met the father and the mother of our race at the gateways of the East, and from that morning to this the work goes on. How like a God He sows! Never heeding the waste, never crushed by the ingratitude, never tired by the toil, He plants where hope has failed Him a hundred times, He buries resentment, He rises fresh to the task from the depths of discouragement and fatigue. A mere man, though the peer of history's supremest hero, would have centuries ago given over effort, and abandoned men to the death they so persistently covet. But God is other, God is other; and His perseverance is indomitable. One single force in the universe can interfere with His beneficent plans; and that force is the obstinacy of a heart dead in impenitence and sin.

Witness the disciples, witness Judas at the Last Supper. "And there was a strife among them, which of them should seem to be the greater." How like an idiot's laugh in the chamber of death is this untimely contention among the apostles! All their solicitous alarm about the Master's betrayer vanishes in an instant, and with the chair of leadership empty, they want to know who by right will occupy the position of dignity. They ought to be all sorrow at the Master's loss, and they are all eagerness for personal ascendancy. Ambition is blind to the incongruous. Incapacity is no bar to its entrance into the heart, and it

clamors for recognition at the peasant's gate as well as at the king's. Knowledge of their native weakness and ignorance ought to have operated to quench the mad desire for rule entertained by these dull fishermen. All the persuasive sermons preached on humility during the three years were wholly or in part lost on these pupils in Christ's school. Certainly no fault attached to the Teacher. He employed all the resources of divinity to drive His lessons home. Perhaps He meant His failure to serve for encouragement to teachers and superiors in His kingdom. He will make one more effort to enlighten them in the matter. He tells them that among the Gentiles superiority is a badge of honor, that obedience is seal of true nobility among the elect. Therefore command savors of worldliness, authority is a necessary evil, and submission is the consummation of the gospel. Superiors are for subjects, not vice-versa. Christ is servant among the brethren, and He ought to know. To make amends for the needed rebuke, to save them from despair, He adds a word of timely praise. He makes acknowledgment that in all Israel they alone continued with Him in temptation, and He hints at a surpassing reward. Supremacy among men is at best a dubious blessing, in no way commensurate with the heroism of their conduct. He reserves its reward for Heaven, where He will dispose to them a kingdom, seating them on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the same mystery Christ washed the feet of Judas with the others, to teach impetuous superiors moderation. The heart of Judas is an open book to the Sav-

iour, his deviltry is a thorn in the Saviour's side; and He hints at the pain, when He says that the disciples are not all clean. He hopes against hope for a change in the man; and, to help grace in the struggle going on in his thoughts, He pathetically refers to that pact with the priests now nearing consummation. Christ uses His foreknowledge not to rebuke, but to warn and win. But the ears of Judas are deaf to the delicate allusion. Avarice has sealed them tight to every merciful message, and contempt of one grace paves the way to contempt of whatever warning follows. "He knew who he was who would betray Him," and superior to every instinct of human pride and hate, He kneels before Judas to wash his feet, while the hands of Judas are reddening with his benefactor's adorable blood. Judas should have shouted with pain, acknowledged his guilt, and prayed the forgiveness Christ stood ready to grant. But passion is a chaotic abyss, its victim stumbles ahead from bad to worse, and the climax in the tragedy is delayed another day.

Again, after Communion the Lord Christ displays towards Judas that infinite forbearance so requisite in His representatives. Before Communion Christ had adverted to the traitor's presence. Now He returns to the subject. The first call to repentance had failed of its purpose. He therefore issues a second. At Peter's bidding John asks the Master for definite information, and in token of reward for his virginity is told that the traitor is he to whom He will reach bread dipped. This favor was a mark of friendship among guests at table; and, apart from John, the other disciples saw in

it nothing but another act of condescension on the part of Christ. When Christ followed up the kindness with a request that the rising Judas do quickly what he contemplated doing, the others naturally coupled his hasty departure with the transaction of some financial business abroad. Again therefore infinite goodness comes to the rescue of infinite rascality, and saves Judas from the fate he richly deserved at the hands of the apostles. Had they known the true state of affairs, they might have torn Judas piecemeal in their wrath, and the world would have excused them.

The treatment accorded to the lost sheep is perhaps another index of Christ's wishes with respect to patient forbearance on the part of superiors. Beyond the self-inflicted unpleasantness of past experiences, its return to the fold was attended by no disagreeable circumstances. The Lord Christ establishes no heavy penalties for return to virtue. He invests reform with no repellent conditions. Nowhere in the gospels is He credited with a word of reproach for Peter or Magdalen. He made Peter head of His Church, He made Magdalen second to His Blessed Mother in the distribution of comfort after the Resurrection. Before receiving them back to favor, He did not first tempt them by rough usage to persevere in their career of sin. His gentle forgiveness flooded the way to holiness with so much light that wrong choice was next to impossible. No unheartening periods of probation, no wasted years of grinding penance intervened between their repentance and their full restoration to friendship. Shortsighted mortals on scattered occasions

make this flagrant mistake, and the lost souls of subjects goaded to despair by unseemly and unneeded torture are on the consciences of whatever superiors, forgetting this characteristic trait of the gentle Christ, treat the erring with all the cruelty of demons, and make capital out of their self-imposed helplessness. They cannot plead ignorance for excuse, because the lesson is too plainly written to be missed. They cannot plead zeal, because zeal run to seed and trampling under foot the rights of others is a crime in the eyes of God, and nothing short of irresponsible madness can save its owner from heavy penalty. They cannot plead concern for the welfare of the organization whose authority they wield, because individuals have rights as well as corporations, and in religion the emergency seldom arises, when any one member has to be sacrificed for the good of the body. I call your attention to this solemn fact because intimately persuaded that now and then in religion open wrongs are done the helpless under the flimsy pretext of zeal. Christ's crucifixion by them that sat on the chair of Moses in Israel, is repeated in the persecution of the least of His brethren by men and women as puffed up with an exaggerated sense of their authority and responsibility as the high priests, the Scribes and the Pharisees.

And the crime goes on, because never a word of complaint is uttered, and superiors in religion seldom encounter opposition. Their victims, no matter what their faults, at the threshold of the religious life made Christ their model, and Christ counseled non-resistance to authority, even when demons of pride like Cæsar

and Pilate wielded it. The white robe of the fool is being worn by men in religion, who little deserve the stigma; and superiors complacently assist at the spectacle. I would awaken no discontent in the hearts of these sufferers. Far be it from me to urge the misunderstood to any species of self-justification. You are walking right ways, you are in the footsteps of Christ; and God grant you the giant courage needed to walk all the way to the hill of sorrows and die on its cross-crowned summit. But I have a word of warning for their petty persecutors. Let them stop, listen and look. A brother's blood is on their hands. They are killing ambition, shortening men's power for good, and embittering worthy lives. They are halting the onward progress of God's kingdom, and delaying things a hundred years. Let them look to it, and mend their ways, or await in dread the avenging hand of God's greater wrath. Christ came to save the sheep of Israel that were lost; He came to cure the sick, not the sound; and on occasions some of His representatives find supreme delight in crushing the bruised reed and quenching the smoking flax.

Another kindness superiors owe their subjects is a readiness to encourage their feeble efforts in every direction. It ought to be every superior's ambition to have in her community no stranger in Jerusalem. In community they are strangers in Jerusalem, who take no interest in things. And the calamity finds its way into religion. I venture to think that few convents, colleges, monasteries escape the blighting influence of damaging indifference on the part of disgruntled, dis-

appointed or downtrodden members. And the glory of God suffers a vast deal in consequence. Work for the neighbor remains undone, progress is halted in the kingdom, and souls fail of perfection that in another environment would be easy and assured. The shoulders of authority are burdened with a heavy responsibility, and its chiefest labor would seem to be strenuousness in the matter of provoking subjects to love for their work. Religious never cease to be men and women, and it is highly wrong for superiors to abandon them to the unaided resources of faith and grace. In their management nature must be taken into account; and nature is not helped to enthusiasm by the nagging process of opposition and persecution. Narrow and pinched methods of government can produce a nation of slaves. They can never weld together a republic of patriots, ready to suffer and die for their country. Effects are no better than their causes, and selfishness in superiors cannot except by miracle beget the heroism of sacrifice in subjects. Enthusiasm is broad and wide, and as such it calls for magnanimity and generosity in leaders, who would have enthusiastic followers. There is a whole lot of philosophy in the words of the great Edmund Burke, "He censures God, who quarrels with the imperfections of men. Applaud us when we run; console us when we fall; cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on—for God's sake—let us pass on." Of course subjects ought to forget nature, spiritualize their motives, and work ahead independently of treatment accorded them. But the superior who palliates his own crookedness of disposition by any so

unworthy a reflection betrays a woful lack of even worldly wisdom. The additional incentive of encouragement can exert its full influence without at all diminishing the vigor of supernatural motives, and it is damning nature to unholy purposes to suppose that it must always and invariably prove an obstacle to grace. Till workmen in the vineyard are captive to the cause of God's glory, till men's hearts are really and truly enamoured of the tasks their heads and hands undertake, while some progress may still be made, results are bound to be disappointing, and energy is going to waste for want of proper manipulation.

XI

CHARITY AND SUBJECTS

“Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Colossians, 3, 23.

By virtue of charity superiors must do their subjects the double kindness of patient forbearance with their faults and sincere encouragement of their feeble efforts. We were at some pains in our last talk to drive this lesson home, and we based the truth of our statement on the example of Christ under the guise of our Good Shepherd and in His dealings with the apostles. But this duty of charity weighs as heavily on subjects as on superiors; and since most of us are going to be subjects all our lives, this end of the question is most practical and most important. By virtue of charity subjects must do their superiors the triple kindness of zealous coöperation, whole-souled obedience, and heroic sufferance of real and seeming wrongs. And again we appeal to the example of Christ and His Blessed Mother to make good the position we take. Christ was subject as well as superior; and, whether men in authority or men in the ranks, we can always find in the divine life of Christ a heroic model able to tax our loftiest ambitions. The four gospels are a volume packed tight with lessons as attractive as they are salutary, and with displays of

virtue as provocative of endeavor as they are of awe and wonder. Zeal, obedience to authority and superhuman patience are everywhere conspicuous in the pages of the gospel, and they are the badge of all our tribe, religious as we are by profession; they are a soldier's buttons in the army of the Lord, they are the kindness subjects owe their superiors by virtue of charity. Zeal is a big appetite for work, saints are always hungry in the service of the Master, and we are looking for incentives to growth in zeal. Again I invite your attention to that parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd. We can piously suppose that the wandering sheep and the pursuant shepherd are met where night takes leave of earth, and dawn stands ready in the east to scatter the horizon with all the glories of approaching sunrise. The sheep can teach us absorption in Christ, that prime requisite for steady progress. We can learn from the shepherd the supreme need of that singleness of purpose, alone able to make our zeal profitable and efficient. One thing is necessary, the love and service of God; and till this truth becomes an instinct with us, a settled principle, part and parcel of our familiar knowledge, we are doomed to halt at intervals along the way, repeatedly stumble, and end with almost certain failure. We must be slaves chained to one thought, captives bound to one purpose, and no lesser light on our horizon must be ever allowed to even momentarily quench or dim this central sun of our existence, this ruling luminary meant to control men's conduct, the greater glory of God. Without this saving precaution mere salvation

is next to impossible, holiness of high or low degree is altogether out of the question. Like this sheep at the heels of the shepherd, we must follow Christ absorbed in one idea, and past experience must be perpetual incentive to perseverance in the practice. The shepherd finds his sheep because he went after him with energy, undaunted by danger, with his whole heart in the work. What is never looked for, is never found; and to waver in the search, to turn one side, spoils all chances of success. Zeal is war, and soldiers constitute the Church militant. In war concentration of forces means victory, a scattered array promotes weakness and presages defeat. Zeal is husbandry. Seed has to be sown, trees have to be planted, and things that grow must be watched till maturity. It is the old story of the forester. The pruning-hook is never out of his hands. Superfluous branches have to be lopped, and vigor from the roots must be distributed through as few channels as possible. We are capable of only limited effort, and the man with a few irons in the fire can dream of accomplishment with more security than the man with a hundred different projects in hand. Concentration is provocative of enthusiasm in the leader himself and in his followers. Enthusiasm is contagious; and to work with profit among souls, our efforts must be valiantly seconded by the souls for whose welfare we are toiling. The cause of virtue is not dead yet in the world outside. God is a living issue, and His most pernicious enemies must still acknowledge that He holds men's attention. Deserters from His flag, renegades to virtue, would

seem to be in the majority; only because men and women are grown that weak, they cannot withstand difficulty, that accustomed to defeat they cannot see their way to winning. We can stiffen their courage by throwing ourselves into the fight with ardor, and showing them by the example of our devotion that the prize is worth the struggle and within the reach of the weakest. We are less alarmed at the mammoth proportions of a colossal undertaking, when aware that men like ourselves have met and solved the problem.

Zeal gathers new energy from the thought that all the pain of Christ's Passion has the salvation of souls for single object. Since its consecration by the hallowed and hallowing touch of Christ, work in the vineyard is divine, and association with Christ in this sublime purpose surpasses the dignity of kings. We love them that love us, all the love of our fond Redeemer resides in His one quality of Saviour, and He wants us to manifest our love for Him in the same arduous capacity. In the world around us there are souls without number to be saved, and we can never complain that opportunities to ply our trade are wanting. Every neighbor is a centre of endeavor and a field for exercise. Christ's cry from the cross, "Save my souls!" should be forever ringing in our ears to harden us in courage and goad us to activity. We must work hard and pray harder for the world's conversion. "Thy Kingdom come," is our motto, and we are knights in the army of the Lord. We must close ranks, grip tighter our arms, and go down to the battle like crusaders on fire with the enthusiasm of a

soldierly Christian spirit. Like our Church, every religious order in its origin, its scope and its methods is a military organization; and he misses entirely its spirit, who fancies it a praying body content to let the world go what way it will, if only no harm is done the private piety and devotion of its members. To be true to our apostolic calling, we must take an active part in history's events. We must be soldiers equipped and ready for opposition, prepared for the emergencies of war. We can promise ourselves the surpassing favor made the apostles that first Ascension Day, "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." We are sons and heirs of these apostles, and we must make ready for the transformation. Man is of small avail without this right hand of the Most High. To receive the power of the Holy Ghost is to receive God; and to receive God is to share in His attributes. His omnipotence can enable us to do stout battle with temptation, His immutability can help us shake off our quality of inconstancy and persevere in virtue. "You shall be witnesses unto me." And surely that is reward enough. With these disciples we are chosen soldiers of the King, ambassadors of God, men with a message. We hold this particular corner in the Lord God's army. There must be no break along the line in our neighborhood. Brethren in arms scattered the world over can take care of things elsewhere. This is our post, here lies our duty.

These apostles are our models and it is our privilege

to single them out for special study. Like ourselves they are on the eve of marching orders. Beyond the smooth waters of Galilee's lake stretches the world of mystery and sin, with a line of mountains concealing it from view. Tomorrow these sturdy apostles must staff in hand cross the lake and the mountains, and journey to the earth's end in pursuit of souls for the Master. After Pentecost they shall be in a whirlwind of disaster, the entire pagan world shall rise in arms against them, and to a man they shall seal with their blood the doctrines they and we preach. There was a world of comfort for them in this last meeting, and I can readily fancy how when wounded, tired and unheartened, they borrowed inspiration from thought of it. We must do the same. We religious must borrow inspiration from the thought that like the apostles we hold our commission from God our King. The martyrdom to which we are called is different from that which sealed the labors of our models, but none the less annoying and harassing. We may not have to die for the faith, but we must live for it; and that task is the harder. Duty is our martyrdom, and there are deeper wounds than swords can make.

Obedience is our martyrdom, authority is executioner, and we must bow our necks to the knife. "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you." All His Passion bears eloquent witness to the Lord Christ's love for obedience; and here at the Last Supper, the threshold of His sufferings, we can pause long enough to borrow from the Master's example the courage needed to stand with a stout heart to rule

and the harsher prescriptions of obedience. With death staring Him in the face, with the certainty that this act of religion is the occasion chosen by the enemy for His arrest and ultimate execution on the cross, He nevertheless forgets danger and despises death to keep the feast of the Pasch, and manifest loyalty to the law of His people. No amount of trouble, no ordinary degree of discomfort excuse us from strict fidelity to rule, and this heroism of observance is a sweet sorrow in the martyrdom of religious life. In more senses than one obedience cost Christ His life, and His followers must be ready for the sacrifice.

His was a prompt, entire and courageous obedience. He continually kept one foot forward ready to rush whithersoever sent, whether to joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, life or death. No time was lost disputing the nature of a command. Even the foulest wrongs, when they embodied no sin, were in His eyes most sacred rights, because with the aid of the magician faith He saw God in authority, and in His ears voices from the demon-priests of Israel sounded like the voice of God. When Scribes and Pharisees sat on the chair of Moses, their wicked conduct met with a severe reprimand at His lips, their orders invariably met with respectful obedience. At home in Nazareth there was no clashing of wills, no difference of opinion. All was harmony, everybody, with St. Paul, thinking and saying the same thing. And the Lord Christ carried this habit of obedience with Him from Nazareth to Jerusalem, from the hidden life to His public ministry.

Authority changed hands without changing its nature. Mary and Joseph yielded place to Caiphas and Pilate; but it was all one to Jesus. His meat was to do the will of His Father, and the Father can employ a demon or a donkey for the conveyance of His messages. From the night in the stable to His "Consummatum est," on the cross, the Lord Christ's lifelong obedience knew no break or interruption. He obeyed wicked authorities. It was a sin for Pilate to condemn Him to death. It was no sin for Jesus to stretch out His hands and feet for the nails to soldiers detailed that day as grim executioners to the hill of sorrows. It is a sin for superiors from any faulty motive whatever, whether it be lack of virtue or excess of zeal, to oppress subjects, hinder the Kingdom, or inflict unnecessary pain. It is no sin in a subject with or without protest to submit to injustice, hide his talents, and embrace unwelcome inactivity at the bidding of obedience. It is his privilege, not his duty, to complain; and he can commend the wrongdoer to God.

The motives for obedience are commonplaces with religious. Our lesson is set us at our first entrance into the noviceship; and till we are carried out for burial, no day goes without its opportunity to test our progress and scholarship. St. Ignatius would have us be as dead bodies in the hands of superiors; and corpses make no outcry when subjected to ill-usage. He would have us divest ourselves of personality, forget that we are free and intelligent beings, and sink to the low level of a walking-stick for authority's

purposes. And the walking-stick gathers dust in a corner without complaint, it sustains the tottering limbs of its owner when he fares forth, it warns away danger, and removes obstacles from his path. We voluntarily entered religion to make one in a community, and we honestly want the body to which we belong to prosper. There can be no community without organization, and among human beings organization is impossible without authority and obedience. Better work results when head and members are in harmony. Time is lost and efficiency is shortened, when wills are slow to take up allotted tasks; and obedience is weak as water, when minds are contrary to the master-mind in an undertaking. Obedience proffered against persuasion smacks of strain, and strain is sure forerunner of a break. Every lesser light in the heavens is servant to the sun, and obedience is secret of the stupendous power and harmony that fasten our wonder on the firmament. The Church's prosperity is built on obedience to Pope, bishop and priest. A country endures and grows as long as the multitude does homage to duly constituted authority. The members must be subject to the head, and they that know must govern them that work. We cannot all be Cæsars. If all men were philosophers who would sell peanuts to the philosopher's children? The man behind the guns contributes as much to victory as the admiral in the conning-tower. But these are motives as cogent with soldiers and sailors as they are with religious. We know motives altogether denied them, based as they are on supernatural wisdom. Faith is our anchor, and

obedience tied to faith can ride in safety whatever storm. Obedience is bound to be imperfect, unless it sees God in superiors. To obey men and women in their individual capacity is slavery, and slavery is a galling yoke. To obey God in man or woman is the inheritance of the free, and robs religious obedience of all suspicion of shame. Religion therefore adds, as it were, a new dogma to the many truths we must as members of the Catholic Church believe. And this new dogma turns on the presence of God in superiors, on the substantial identity of their messages with God's.

We must do and be done in the service of God, and the larger half of holiness lies in painfully trudging along in the bleeding footsteps of Christ. We must love sorrow, welcome pain and laugh at troubles that cannot follow us beyond the grave. Mary in the temple must be our model. She understood not the words addressed to her on that occasion by her Divine Son. Mysteries thicken, and Mary is moving in the shadows. This is third chapter in the history of wonders. The words of the shepherds were beyond her comprehension, the words of Simeon about a rending sword were even more provocative of surprise, and now she fails of the full meaning of this allusion to the Father's business. The clouds roll by on Calvary. In that solemn hour all these annoying incidents are going to be stripped of their mystery, and Mary shall at last understand that her Son's sorrows and her own steadily settled towards a world's redemption. And Mary has her counterparts in religion. There are

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hearts among us, waiting for the clouds to lift and flood the day with sunshine. We cannot see, we cannot understand. God is leading us along blind ways by the hands of obedience. We try, and fail. We meet with opposition where we looked for encouragement. We never come up to our own expectations of ourselves, and that is disappointment enough. But heavier crosses await us. We sometimes in spite of our best endeavors fall short of standards others set us, and then persecution is in order. We are led out to execution, and God's ways seem ever stranger. But the clouds roll by somewhere or other in life; and even if this comfort is denied us, we can still trust that things will be made right beyond the grave. Some lose their lives here on earth, only to find them in Heaven. We must be patient, we must unload our anxiety on the tender mercy of God, to wait in silent and uncomplaining sorrow for the end of the pitiful story. We know with St. Paul that to such as love God everything works together unto good.

The two angels at the tomb on Easter morning can minister comfort to our tired and troubled thoughts. These two had been told off from the army to do guard duty, and they are silent reminders of souls in religion condemned by obedience to unwelcome posts. They also serve, who only stand and wait, and the thought can help to strengthen us when we lose caste with authority, forfeit place in the procession, and sojourn in the wilderness of obscurity and inactivity. The other angels, thousands of them, are walking in the heels of Christ's triumph, witnesses to the

tumultuous joy of the patriarchs and prophets, judges, kings and people liberated from Limbo and admitted to that ravishing interview between Mother and Son; and these two, if angels could grieve, ought to weep their eyes red with tears at thought of the holiday enjoyed by their fellow angels.

Oh the wondrous uses of adversity! It is the mantle God often throws over His shoulders to steal His way into our presence, and engage for a season our undivided attention. God never strikes to kill. Every chastisement He inflicts has curative powers. He strikes to heal and every trial He sends a son is another golden opportunity. He inflicts pain only when and where it is needed. He has a balm for every hurt He makes. See in every mishap of life the finger of God! Love adversity! Its uses are manifold. It is a royal road, and a sure one. Prosperity is a dangerous thing! The Lord Christ never once deigned to seal it with His benediction. It has elements strangely conducive to forgetfulness of God and Heaven. We never long so ardently for our true home, we never turn with so much child-like earnestness to God, we are never so thoroughly alive with the instincts of faith, as when torn, and bruised, and bleeding with sorrow, as when overwhelmed with a sense of abandonment, as when trained in the school of disappointment to despise the comforts this earth has to offer. Fathers and mothers accord sons different treatment. Fathers spare them no sweat, no tears; mothers humor them and save them every pain and discomfort. God's way is the father's. Calamity

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teaches how much a man is worth. A veteran glories in his wounds, a tin soldier faints at sight of a scratch. Storms prove the able pilot, battle tries the soldier's mettle. Sailors have hard hands from hauling the ropes, farmers have hard hands from holding the plough.

Success is no infallible sign of God's favor. Oftener than not it is a mark of God's displeasure. St. Teresa had the truth when she cried out, "To suffer, or die!" Life without pain lost in her eyes all its attractiveness, it was no longer worth living; and with a period put to her sufferings, she wanted to die. Trust therefore to God's providence. And this providence is not the inexorable fate of the ancients. It is no haphazard grouping of events. No blunder has part in its arrangements, because the eye of God gives them being, and that eye never sleeps. No blunder is possible, because infinite wisdom is at the wheel. No cruelty is conceivable in its decrees, because a fond Father is managing affairs in behalf of His sons. No violence is done free will, because God's Master-mind knows from eternity whatever has happened, happens or is going to happen. Future contingencies are as clear to His vision as present facts are to ours; and, without exerting a hair's weight of stress on human freedom, He knows beforehand how men are going to behave in every emergency that can befall them. And so the history of every free agent, from Adam to his latest son, is writ large in the capacious mind of God, and with this comprehensive knowledge of past, present and future events in His thoughts, He sits Him

down like a train-dispatcher to regulate the smooth and easy motion of the universe. Saints and sinners have their own fixed places in this mammoth train-sheet; and because everything is provided for beforehand by infinite wisdom, no collision can occur, and things go round from end to end mightily. So God and His creatures work together in consummate harmony. Providence has its way in spite of man's full measure of freedom, and man continues free in spite of immutable Providence's unchanging laws. As Dante beautifully puts it, "Providence is no more responsible for this or that particular act of the individual man than the watcher on shore is for the direction a ship takes under influence of the wind and tide." "Providence," says Boethius, "is the long chain of causes and events, subject matter of history, pre-existent in the mind of God; and God's mind bolts every link of the chain in proper place with rivets that are wonderfully tight and surpassingly mysterious."

Therefore, trust to Providence. God knows best. He has His plans. Scorn to interfere with them. Whole-souled coöperation with them must be our chiefest concern. He sends us opportunities without number, and we must be alive to our responsibilities. "Take time by the forelock, the back of opportunity's head is bald," says Cato. "*Fronte capillata est, a tergo occasio calva.*" Trust in Providence is provocative of courage, and to appreciate opportunity's worth is to grow in alertness and efficiency. Knowledge of the future would be worse than barren. It might prove annoying, it might prove destructive.

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One thing is necessary, the love and service of God. St. Paul puts at our disposal one piece of knowledge quite able to satisfy our greedy hearts in whatever environment of prosperity or disaster. "We know," he says, "that to them that love God all things work together unto good." Rom. 8, 28. Therefore, love God and dismiss your cares.

XII

CHARITY AND EQUALS

"A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city." Proverbs, 18, 19.

WE paid our respects to superiors, we hinted at the duties subjects owe their superiors; and now, to crown our work, we mean to set forth at what length the brief time at our disposal permits the duties of equals to equals in community. Superiors, we said, in charity owe their subjects the double kindness of patient forbearance with their follies, and sincere encouragement of their feeble efforts. Subjects owe their superiors the triple kindness of hearty coöperation, whole-souled obedience and heroic sufferance of real and seeming wrongs. Everybody owes everybody else in community a multitude of favors and their very number renders selection difficult. However, some choice must be made, and we prefer for the present to touch these several topics, (1) appreciative esteem of the neighbor's good qualities; (2) amiable content with the company of your sisters; (3) sincere friendship for all without the attendant evils of (a) jealousy, (b) absorption, (c) treason and (d) particularity; (4) the gentle art of pleasing others; (5) seasonable kindness; and a (6) compliant spirit.

1. The man or woman unable to fall in love with

souls in religion has a strange heart. And I venture to think that the only men and women of the kind in the world are religious themselves. Familiarity breeds contempt, and a king himself is a hero of a very diminished size in the eyes of his valet. In the monastery and convent we are so accustomed to holiness that it loses in impressiveness and splendor. We move in and out among heroes of men and heroines of women, among the nobility of God, and our appreciation of their grandeur is hurt by the experience. Men and women in the world enjoy only a limited and distant acquaintance with souls in religion, and their esteem for religious grows in proportion. They reckon religious for what they really are, God's paupers, angels of purity and marvels of obedience, and think the lives they lead worthy of more enduring monuments than bronze or marble. They are lavish of their alms, lavish of their favor, lavish of their reverence. They go deep down into their pockets to render our works of zeal possible. They load us with tokens of esteem and affection. They pay us a measure of reverence and respect accorded no mortal besides. Religious alone fail to appreciate religious at their true worth, and familiarity with greatness must be the reason.

When at home with one another, it ought to be easy to recall the army of the Lord Christ in the meditation on the Two Standards. What an august company the folds of His flag shelter! All the virtue the world has ever known moves in the ranks of this army. Everything honorable and heroic in human

history finds its place here. Our comrades in arms are the martyrs, the hermits, the virgins of heroic times. "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis." Brave men are born of the brave and good. Brave fathers sire brave sons. We are with the world's elect; and, to spare them offence, to shield their fair name from shame, we must ambition the splendid achievements of heroes and heroines, whose company we keep. We did not thrust ourselves into arduous companionship with them. "He hath chosen us, we have not chosen Him." And He who called us, can and must enable our weakness to stand to duty. We occupy our chair in the class-room with a commission from the king. How mean to work against the cause by the bad example of imperfect lives. When policemen turn thieves, when judges side with evil-doers, destruction hangs over the commonwealth.

2. Religion ushers us into good company. A glance at the assembled community gives assurance of this. Our companions are strenuous soldiers enlisted in the same glorious cause. With all their faults they are magnanimous souls, men and women of heroic mould, able for God's sake to bid farewell to whatever the world reckons sweet and pleasant. What a crime to bestow on others the affection that belongs to them. We must have no leisure, no inclination for the cultivation of what the world calls friends. Our fellows in camp must be our only friends, and we must admit to friendship only heroes wearing the same colors as ourselves, and bound by the same oath of allegiance. Verily we ought to be content with the company of the

brothers and sisters religion gives us. Recall the story of the lost sheep. All his trouble had its root in a species of discontent with his surroundings. Our rules are a hedge, marking off the territory we are to keep, and all the country round is a desert infested with wild beasts and thick with danger. The superior is shepherd, and we are at our best only when in close touch with obedience. Want of union in any society hurts the whole concern, the body politic and the individual parts. Our brothers and sisters compose the flock, and we are safest in their company. Their tastes are of a kind with our own, their example is an unfailing incentive to holiness. It is a sad mistake to wander far from their side in body or spirit, and quests for friendship outside the monastery are usually attended with disaster. And yet in the life of every religious comes a period of discontent, and these periods are more frequent with some than with others. The poets talk of a certain feeling denominated wanderlust, a desire to get away from old surroundings, and tarry a short or long space among new scenes, new faces, new friends. A voice appropriately termed the call of the wild assails even the wisest ears on occasions, and to heed it spells trouble. Some such invitation induced the sheep in the story to wander wide of the flock. In the parable of the prodigal some such echo led the younger son to leave his father's house, and go abroad into a far country. We tire of restraint, we grow curious about the beyond, we dream of sweeter and greener grass in distant pastures. And oh, the folly of looking for satisfaction

in forbidden delights, the folly of building our hopes for content somewhere away from home!

Every convent ought to be built on Nazareth for a model. See Jesus, Mary and Joseph at recreation. Oh, the hours they spent together in quiet communion, their hearts on fire with love for God, and breaking to win the world of sin to that love! They were at home in one another's company. There was no desire to be elsewhere, no irksomeness, no petty spites, or hates, or unkindness. Frankness and openness characterized their conversation, because there were no passions or weaknesses to hide. We must make our recreations resemble those hallowed meetings of Earth's Trinity, the blessed three. We must banish unkindness, banish whatever savors of roughness. Untold harm is done the neighbor, when his faults are made topic of conversation. Want of malice may excuse the offender from serious sin, but the victim of his folly suffers none the less on that account. It must be our aim to make recreation religiously agreeable and agreeably religious. God and virtue must be introduced without provoking discomfort or displeasure. Loquacity and taciturnity are extremes to be carefully avoided. Some good religious would seem to be afraid of their own voices. Some approach recreation, their minds preoccupied with a thousand outside cares. Others are too talkative, reminiscent even to fatigue. The golden art of inducing others to talk ought to be sedulously cultivated, and the secret of success rests in being good listeners. Recreation ought to be a pleasant employment.

3. (a) In our friendships we must guard against jealousy, and jealousy would seem to be the hurt human love feels when denied exclusive ownership. It is open to the suspicion of selfishness, and this single trait ought to forever condemn it in the eyes of a religious. In the mystery of the Child's loss in the temple we can admire in Mary and Joseph the spirit of generosity, betrayed in their willingness to share with others the rich treasure they enjoyed in Jesus. They were not so greedy of their rare possession as to pine away with grief, when He dispensed the sunshine of His conversation and comfort in other circles. And jealousies are not uncommon in the convent and monastery. In fact the narrowness of their precincts is a perpetual incentive to the multiplication of jealousies. The world is large, and offers a wide variety of friends for selection. Religion is circumscribed in its extent, and friendships are necessarily few. Of course, if we were awake to our true interests, dead to creatures, and divested of human affection, we should be immune from jealousy, because secure against the fondness that renders it possible. And yet, viewing the subject in a sensible way, we ought to be heartily glad when a friend's influence for good is lengthened by contact with a larger world than any we could offer. Increased popularity is a favor for the friend, and new joy for the recipients of his attention. There is sorrow enough in the universe without our adding to it, and we ought to hold ourselves consecrated to the lovelier task of increasing the sunshine. It is cruel to wish to diminish the supply by hampering a friend in his endeavors to

promote good cheer. Jealousy is a species of pride, and works no worry to the humble. They count themselves worthy of nobody's notice, and wonder at the display of patient forbearance manifest in every common civility done them. Finally, it is folly to lean for happiness on any creature, even though it be the fond heart of a fond friend. Change is as native to things created as their very essence; and when the dreaded change comes, jealousy falls to madness, and the hour of agony attaching to loss kills recollection of fruition's honeyed years. We must seek out a pillar in the desert of our thoughts, mount it for pedestal, and like Stylites of old view with indifference the applause and the hisses, the esteem and the contempt, the love and the hatred of men. In the affair of salvation God and each single soul constitute the whole firm. Our very brothers and sisters in religion are rank outsiders, they are meddlers; and if we want to know uninterrupted peace, if we want to taste unalloyed happiness, we must keep them where they belong, on the outer edge of the heart's sacred precincts. That little organ must belong in its entirety to God. Everything less than God must be loved for God's sweet sake, and love of this stamp never degenerates to jealousy.

(b) While on this mystery of the Child's loss in the temple, one truth conspicuously obtrudes itself on our notice, and that truth is the difference between what I should call the apostolic spirit and the family spirit. The apostolic spirit is essentially opposed to anything like absorption in friends. We religious are apostles by very profession. We left our fathers' homes, to

tarry forever in the temple. We agreed to live always among strangers, and to never call any roof our own. Our vow of chastity means more than we sometimes think. In its integrity it means the abandonment of company, love, friends. These are appurtenances of marriage, and form part of the sacrifice. They are dangers; and he courts ruin who runs into danger. Superiors can somewhat atone for our losses by kindness. They can make subjects fond of their new home, by investing it with reminders of the home voluntarily and generously sacrificed. Parents and friends must stand one side when the Father's business looms up on the horizon. Friends shorten an apostle's power for good. They distract his attention, divide his heart, and limit his efficiency. They accustom him to comfort, when he ought to be hardening his rugged soul for manly encounter. Learn a lesson from the forester. He promotes growth by lopping off superfluous branches, and restricting the tree's vital energies to a few vigorous limbs. Concentration is the secret of apostolic success, and there can be no concentration where a multitude of units are striving for the soul's attention.

(c) Treasonable friendships are not unknown in religion, and we religious must be ready for the ordeal. One of the twelve betrayed Christ, and the servant is no better than his Master. In His Passion, false friendship is the first pang inflicted on the fond Heart of Jesus. Judas betrays Him with a kiss, with what all the world regards love's crowning token. And to teach us how to bear up under the same heavy

wrong, the Master with divine patience submits to the indignity. We need the lesson. Abandonment, whether real or fancied, is a killing curse, and periods of abandonment are tearful pages in every man's history. Children abandon parents or refuse them the love they covet, and to which they have a sacred right. Parents abandon their children, or deny them the affection implanted in their bosom by a beneficent Maker. Friendships of long standing are broken, and men who stood with me a year ago are today ranged against me in the camp of the enemy. We are not gods, we are not self-sufficient; and we need friends, we need kindred hearts able and willing to share our joys and share our sorrows. Man's happiness is little worth, unless it affects others; and misfortune is overwhelming when it smites a victim devoid of every outside help. And all our years are records of alternate exultation and depression, of petty hates, estrangements, reconciliations. In emergencies of the kind what can hearts do but mourn and weep? Perish the thought! We are not men, if we yield before any calamity incident to human nature. We are traitors to the faith, if we pay the tribute of idle tears to trifling disappointments of the kind. Accidents of the sort are inevitable in life, they are the inheritance of social intercourse; and we are cowards, we are worse, if we allow events, over which we have no control, to rob us of peace or throw us down. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ put Himself in these straits to teach us our duty. When the world looks unlovely, He pitches His vision higher. When the sun loses its light, when mankind's army of

hands is raised to kill Him, He closes His eyes on earth, and kneels at the feet of His Father in Heaven. And this is our assurance of escape from the ills of human friendship. The older we grow, the tighter this conviction fastens on our minds, that after all God is the only friend, on whose loyalty we can eternally count; God is the only friend able to love us without shadow of change; the only friend whose love is stronger than death.

(d) Indifference to personal qualities is a virtue of as far reaching importance in the matter of friendships as it is in the works of zeal. The readiness with which Magdalen at the tomb leaves the angels to converse with a seeming gardener deserves more than passing notice. In her search for Jesus Magdalen closes her eyes to the attractive and repellent features in persons she meets. Angels and gardeners are all one in her esteem, if only they can proffer the information she seeks. The working clothes of the gardener, and his aspect of toil are no bar to conversation with him; and the splendid garments of the angels with all their attendant glory hold her attention only long enough to ask the burning question and hardly await reply. The true apostle in his dealings with children and men is swayed by no consideration based on differences in rank, wealth or attainments. The poor, the lowly, and the slow of mind are as much sons of God and objects of God's tender care as the rich, the influential and the intellectual. In every class at school or college there are dull as well as bright pupils, there are boys and girls with the rough manners proverbially ascribed to

farmers, as well as boys and girls with the winsome ways of angels; and we should not be altogether human, if never tempted to allow the angels to usurp the larger share of our care and attention. And what is true of boys and girls in class, is true of sisters in community. Lovers of the right stamp in religion never take up exclusively with the angels, to relegate the farmers to oblivion and contempt.

4. In our intercourse with brothers and sisters we must never forget the large part small favors play in men's happiness. In this business of charity little things count most. A soft word is often worth more than a house and lot. Pilate made an eternal friend of Herod by empty and feigned recognition of his jurisdiction in Jerusalem; and a seemingly insignificant tribute full often serves to close interminable years of estrangement and bitterness.

5. Notice the etiquette of Heaven manifest in the tender inquiry addressed by the angel to Magdalen at the tomb, "Woman, why weepest thou; whom seekest thou?" We must be beforehand with neighbors overtaken by sorrow. With a rift in the clouds made by judicious conversation, trouble melts away, to clear the atmosphere and widen the golden sky of religion's delights.

The brutality of unkindness never wears a more hideous aspect than when studied in connection with the scourging at the pillar. The soft courtesies of life, the word in season, the smile of welcome that keeps a hunted brother from fleeing to the desert of despair to die, all these lesser virtues assume a more pleasing

shape, when coupled with our man of sorrows alone among these heartless demons. Pity for the friendless is something consecrated after that night of agony against the reddened pillar. To take the part of a stranger, is to take the part of Christ; to stand beside him as a defense, is to stand beside Christ in need; to whisper comfort to his crushed heart, is to steal up to the pillar, and bid the heart of Christ be brave.

6. The seven at Tiberias are a fair model of that compliant spirit so provocative of happiness in the convent. Peter says, "I go a-fishing." The others make answer, "We also come with thee." If not altogether ludicrous, it at least starts a smile to hear the future head of the Church propose a fishing expedition to men like Thomas and Nathaniel, whose hands perhaps had never known the rude touch of mercenary labor. Hauling seine is a matter for wages, and no recognized sport with gentlemen of leisure. And yet they sink their prejudices, to furnish us with an example of that accommodating spirit, so important in community life. In every republic of the kind, where crowds do congregate, happiness is impossible unless some martyrs in the throng silence their preferences and shape their desires to the whims of the multitude or its leader. This group is the convent in miniature. All stand together subordinate to authority; of one mind and one will; saying, thinking, and wishing the same thing.

BOOK II

I

ST. PAUL ON CHARITY

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." I Corinthians, 13, 1.

WE had a lot to say about charity; but the topic is not yet exhausted, and we want to return to the subject. Charity, far from tiring us, ought to be our watchword in life, the inspiration of all our thoughts, words and deeds. St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians gives an entire chapter, the thirteenth, to the praises of this beautiful virtue, and we hate to leave the subject without a brief study of its contents. To the casual reader it must occur to think that these Corinthians were a worry to St. Paul, their father in God, because of certain perverse notions they had regarding the superiority of various startling and heavenly favors as compared with the grace of God or true charity. In those early times, which marked the beginning of faith, to fasten men's attention on His rising Church, God scattered these favors with a profuser hand than now. His Church is at present securely planted in the whole earth, it is as conspicuous to the nations as a light on a candlestick, a city on a mountain, and these extraordinary favors are not so much a need. Things were different when St. Paul worked

in Corinth; and God made His presence felt, forced Himself on men's notice by investing ordinary citizens in His Kingdom, common everyday Christians, with power to perform most stupendous prodigies. Greeks talked their own language, and were most distinctly understood by Romans, Jews and others of widely different nationalities. Prophecy was no uncommon gift among men and women of the time, and the uneducated betrayed a wisdom and a knowledge in things spiritual far beyond anything possible with years of uninterrupted study. Miracles were of frequent occurrence, men saw nothing harsh in surrendering their wealth to the poor, and counted it an honor to lay down their lives for the neighbor. These splendid privileges known as the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of wisdom, of miracles, of instinctive kindness and natural heroism, dazzled men's eyes and blinded them to the surpassing greatness and supreme need of grace or true charity.

2. These privileges are described in theology as *gratiæ gratis datæ*, favors mercifully bestowed on men without any regard to their merit, and with a view not to their own advantage, but to that of others. Sinners enjoyed these privileges in common with saints; and while their possession was no unfailing sign of God's friendship or holiness, it operated to fill their owners with pride, and others with envy. The Corinthians were not above the temptation, and St. Paul warns them against the danger in most vigorous language. Therefore the whole of chapter thirteen is a series of comparisons designed to evince the superi-

ority of sanctifying grace or true charity, as compared with these lesser though far more striking gifts. The gift of tongues, even when the accomplishment of a sinner, excites wonder, appeals to the fancy of listeners, and conciliates their esteem. And what is true of the gift of tongues, is true of the rest. But God's grace hides away in the saint's heart, it is a secret sealed to God and the angels; the saint himself is hardly aware of its presence; and instead of arousing attention or attracting esteem he passes to and fro among others altogether unnoticed. God has sometimes to work miracles after the saint's departure to advertise the world of his heroic virtues; and when a sinner returns to virtue, the earth keeps no holiday, though the angels in Heaven are noisy with tumultuous gladness.

3. Therefore the Corinthians were only human when they were all ardor for these favors of God, and set small or no store by God's grace. And they are not without their imitators at the present day. Tongues, prophecy, wisdom, miracles seldom fall to the lot of any mortal in modern times; and, because they are no longer a pressing need for the growth of His Church, God regularly bestows them on saints alone. Therefore on these four points we are freer from danger than the Corinthians; but the others, instinctive kindness and natural heroism, are still a menace to misguided and imprudent souls. Some men and women are born and grow up with an overwhelming fondness for deeds of charity. Relief of the needy is a sort of passion with them, and they are never happier than when en-

gaged on what they call settlement work, work in the slums. All their spare wealth is devoted to missions on the Bowery, and sometimes they deign to even visit these institutions, reared at their expense, and converse with their inmates. Others full of the idea that book-learning is what the world most needs, scatter the land with libraries, and sink millions in educational projects. Others again are always on the alert to rush into burning houses for the purpose of saving lives; to jump into the river, to rescue drowning persons; to risk their lives stopping a runaway horse on the avenue. Others again, not content with the opportunities for kindness created by poverty among men, go foraging in the domain of brute creation, providing hospitals for ailing cats and dogs, and littering street-corners with buckets of water to alleviate the distress of thirsty horses.

4. All this is very fine from one point of view; from another it is highly dangerous and harmful. At least St. Paul seems to think so, and as an inspired writer St. Paul preached only what God approves. Wealth, when used to uplift the poor and relieve their needs, is well employed; though it is better employed when the grace of God or true charity inspires the deed of kindness. Education is a worthy motive, and money spent to promote the widespread diffusion of knowledge is not money altogether wasted. It benefits the persons educated, though it profits their benefactor nothing, unless the grace of God or true charity prompts the gift. Natural heroism always stirs admiration, and it deserves no higher reward than the empty applause it

gets, unless the grace of God or true charity renders the heroic deed supernatural. Kindness to brute animals accustoms its patrons to gentle habits, predisposing them to meekness and tenderness towards human beings; and, though in many cases a harmless expenditure of time and energy, it becomes a menace to higher good, when it blinds zealots to the need of God's grace or true charity. Therefore, the more mission-rescues the better; the more libraries the better; the more displays of natural heroism the better; the more prevention of cruelty to animals the better; always with the proviso that these various works rank second in men's esteem to the infinitely more important work of growth in God's grace or true charity. These several works are not of their very nature opposed to love of God. It ought to be just as easy to feed the poor with God's glory for motive, as it is to feed them with personal renown or self-satisfaction for motive. It ought to be just as easy to build libraries and propagate science with a view to parallel advancement of God's interests and religion, as it is to build them with a studied contempt of God and a sneer at the edifices already reared everywhere to the worship of the Creator.

5. Fondness for the neighbor betrayed in a readiness to coöperate generously with his endeavors towards bodily and mental improvement is a good gift of God; it is an instinct mercifully implanted in the hearts of the rich for the amelioration of distresses that fall to the lot of life's unfortunates. But every gift of God we touch we spoil; and the perverseness of some men's natures turns this splendid favor, this

godlike instinct, into a curse and no blessing. St. Paul in most vigorous language declaims against the abuse, and a small acquaintance with the brand of philanthropy current in our own day quite satisfies us that we are no better than the Corinthians, to whom he addressed his Epistle, and that we need the same salutary advice. He contrasts God's favors with God's grace, declaring favors without grace nothing worth, and ascribing to grace without favors surpassing value. He singles out six such favors, and holds this language concerning them. To know all the languages of men and angels without charity, is to be sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. To be a prophet, to know mysteries and all knowledge, to be able to move mountains, without charity, is nothing worth. To give all to the poor, to be burnt alive for the neighbor, without charity, is waste of time and no profit. These six favors are in theological language *gratiæ gratis datæ*, favors conferred on men and women for the good of others, without any regard to their recipients' merit, and nowise contributing to their personal holiness. They are natural goodness of heart, counterfeit charity, love of neighbor without any love for God. God's grace, called in theology *gratia sanctificans*, sanctifying grace, true charity, love of God and love of neighbor conjoined, the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, is a gift conferred on men and women for their own advantage, making their souls fair and beautiful in God's eyes, bestowed always with dependence on their merit, though not on account of their merit, but on account of the infinite goodness of

God. Our dispositions are only a condition, not the cause of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is as much a favor of God as the gift of tongues, or instinctive kindness, or natural heroism, with this single difference that, while sanctifying grace is the exclusive possession of saints, the gift of tongues, instinctive kindness and natural heroism can belong to sinners as well as to saints. Grace cannot exist in the soul without holiness, favors can coëxist in the soul with wickedness. When Caiaphas at the trial of Christ declared that it was expedient for one man to die for the nation, he was a prophet, but no saint. The magicians before Pharaoh with God's permission worked prodigies, but they were servants in the employ of Satan. Therefore these favors or *gratiæ gratis datæ* can be shared by wicked men; true charity, because sanctifying grace, belongs to saints alone. All these favors without charity profit nothing, and the apostle is talking of charity, which is sanctifying grace, love of God and love of neighbor conjoined. One love cannot stand without the other and constitute true charity. One love can stand without the other and constitute counterfeit charity, the kind so conspicuous in modern works of philanthropy. Love of God without love of the neighbor is a lie; and this is St. John's estimate of the thing. Love of the neighbor, even to the extent of delivering oneself to be burned, without love of God, is nothing worth; it is to be sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; it is to waste time, and profit nothing; it is to gain the whole world, and lose one's own soul.

6. If these favors of God proved merely worthless in

the hands of the Corinthians, I can hardly understand St. Paul's vehement insistence on their inferiority. They must have proved damaging besides. Otherwise, the apostle would have been at smaller pains to set the Corinthians right regarding them. Whether they worked harm to the Corinthians or not, certainly parallel favors in modern times are responsible for untold havoc among souls. And we cannot be far wrong in arguing from happenings among Americans of the present day to happenings among the Corinthians of St. Paul's time. Human nature changes only a little in a thousand years. Some men and some women among us really and truly behave as if one dollar or a million dollars spent in charity vested them with full title to a seat in the Kingdom of God. They count deeds of common kindness a valid substitute for prayer, for worship, for virtue, for the sacraments, for faith, religion and everything. They conduct sewing classes for the fell purpose of schooling religion out of young hearts. They contribute whole fortunes to libraries, not a penny to churches. They create pension-funds for retired professors, and studiously bar teachers of the true religion from a share in their benefits. Their love for man is conjoined with hatred for God; and, instead of bearing fruit in the shape of grace or holiness, it bears fruit in the shape of damnation. It is counterfeit and no true charity, it is natural instinct turned aside from its right uses to make obstinate fools cling with all the more obstinacy to their pitiful folly. Their every act of kindness is done to be seen of men; and they have reward in men's es-

teem, and the small fame attaching to a reputation for generosity.

7. Charity, or the grace of God, even without heavenly favors like instinctive kindness or natural heroism, is of supreme advantage to its owner, because it is parent to all the supernatural virtues. This kind of charity never falls away, it is eternal; while heavenly favors are temporal and cease with time, prophecies being made void, tongues becoming silent, and knowledge settling towards destruction. Even faith and hope yield to charity in point of duration. Faith and hope are unknown in Heaven. Faith is believing, and Heaven is seeing. Hope is missing some coveted good, and Heaven is the secure enjoyment of every conceivable good, a heaped up measure of good with unending duration. "And now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of them is charity." And now, to complete his wondrous lesson on charity, the apostle proves it virtue's mother by enumerating fifteen of its inherent qualities. These qualities of charity have a more direct and immediate bearing on the neighbor than on God, because, as holy writers remark, self-deception is easier in love of God than in love of the neighbor. The love of neighbor St. Paul advocates is always animated by love of God and rooted in sanctifying grace. God is always and everywhere its motive; and this circumstance makes a man's every deed of kindness a new virtue, a new argument for reward in Heaven. Of the fifteen qualities enumerated two are general, charity is patient, charity is kind; eight are negative, charity means no envy, no

perverseness, no pride, no ambition, no selfishness, no anger, no sinister thought, no joy in another's wickedness; five are positive, charity rejoices with the truth, bears all, believes all, hopes all, endures all. These qualities will get our attention in a succeeding talk. To conclude for the present, we remark that to be in harmony with St. Paul's recommendations, we must in all our thoughts, words and deeds keep God's greater glory in view; we must teach the boys and girls under our care, not to win their esteem, not to oppress them with a sense of our dignity as eminent educators; but to make them saints, to crowd their impressionable years with reminders of virtue and piety and religion; we must love the men and women God gave us for brothers and sisters in religion with all the tenderness at our disposal, not because of their natural qualities, not because of the sweetness attaching to human friendship; but because God would have us love them, because in loving them we love God, because the encouragement they derive from our fondness may operate to make their lives pleasanter, smooth rough ways, and so help them on and up to the sublimer heights of holiness. To escape the reproaches attaching to counterfeit charity, we must, in the words of St. Ignatius, "Strip ourselves of all love for creatures, fusing love for them into love for their Creator, loving Him in all creatures, and them all in Him according to His most holy and divine will."

II

CHARITY AND PATIENCE

"Charity is patient." I Corinthians, 13, 4.

WE want to return to the fifteen qualities of charity, and see how they prove her virtue's mother. Fifteen units when viewed together distract the mind and render efficient work impossible. Therefore we mean to divide our subject, grouping the fifteen qualities, as far as possible, under two separate heads. Patience and kindness are the two general qualities of charity singled out by St. Paul; and we can perhaps best make them the starting point of our division, arranging under patience the eight negative qualities of charity, under kindness its five positive qualities. With this plan in view St. Paul can be made read as follows. Charity is patient; patience means no selfishness; and no selfishness means no envy, no pride, no ambition. No envy means no joy in another's evil, no sinister thought or rash judgment about the neighbor. No pride means no perverse dealing, no quarrel, no mockery, no scolding. No ambition means no anger. Charity is kind; and kindness means joy in another's good, to the extent of believing all, thinking well of the neighbor, speaking well of him, and treating him well. Kindness besides means to bear all, endure all, hope all.

Therefore, a few words about patience and kindness, to show how they are the perfection of charity. Impatience and unkindness are charity's capital enemies, and they are in last analysis displays of selfishness. All our faults against charity are rooted in the circumstance that we love ourselves too much, God and the neighbor too little. Patience and kindness can correct the evil. And first with regard to patience. Patience is the moral virtue meant to keep sadness in check. Sadness has killed more mortals than the sword.—“Sadness has killed many, and there is no profit in it.” Eccli., 30, 25. “As a moth doth by a garment, and a worm by the wood, so the sadness of a man consumeth the heart.” Prov. 25, 20. Sadness is that emotion provoked in the soul, when overtaken by present evil, and patience is our defense against sadness. Patience therefore enables us to view our hurts with equanimity, to feel pain without crying out, to count our wounds like a soldier, to meet with dry eyes bitter experiences that wet the eyes of weaklings with tears, to know ourselves sinners without surrendering to dejection. All the ills of life are meant for our good; they are pills with the sugar inside; they are good things designed to lift us to better things; and patience steadies us at their approach, compelling us to stand our ground when most tempted to run away. Patience is suffering, it helps a man to carry his burden without complaint, though it lifts no weight from his shoulders. Patience therefore saves us from sadness by robbing present evil of its power to disturb our evenness of temper or balance.

The ills of life have their origin in three principal sources. Some are favors from the hands of Our Father in Heaven; others we create for ourselves; others again are manufactured for us by our neighbors. And we must meet all three kinds with the same set face, the same fixed courage. We must be patient with God, patient with ourselves, and patient with our brothers and sisters or the world at large. We are patient with God, when in exact conformity with His divine will; and if charity, inasmuch as it is love of God, is not mother to this virtue, then conformity with the will of God has no parent. Love is friendship, and friendship is union of wills, a melting together of hearts. Therefore, we really and truly love God only when His wishes are ours, and our wishes are His; and unless conformity means this, it means nothing. Therefore, we are not patient with God, and by consequence we are not fond of God, when we sidestep the discomforts He sends us, when we object to the dispensations of His providence, and kick against His disposition of our own lives and the lives of others. We have sins to expiate, and every cross laid on our shoulders is a new opportunity to cancel old debts, and hasten our entrance into the light of God's presence. Therefore, when our Father in Heaven becomes executioner, we must kiss the hand that smites us, swallow our grief, hold back our tears, and forget our sorrow in a canticle of gladness and humble thanksgiving. We are at liberty on such occasions, it is our privilege, to pray for deliverance. Every such prayer is a new tribute to God's supreme dominion, the hom-

age sits smiling to His heart, and He leans from His throne to catch the whisper. But there must be no murmur of discontent, no pusillanimity, no importunate impatience. "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; yet not my will, but thine be done." God has His plans in the universe, we must scorn to interfere with them. In the drama of life God is manager, we are the actors. Some have speaking parts, others have silent parts. There must be trees or supernumeraries on the stage as well as stars, clowns as well as leading ladies. And the manager assigns everybody in the cast his own particular part. On pay-day the tree draws a smaller salary than the star, but he gets his reward because he contributes in his own small way to the success of the play. If he tried against the wishes of the manager to essay the rôle of the star, he would spoil things, break up the performance, and would soon find himself outside the theatre looking for another job. Everything in the universe has its own fixed place, its own peculiar use. Even the grain of sand and the bump on a log contribute to gravity's efficiency and help procure the equilibrium of this round thing on which we live. Therefore, we must trust to providence, we must bow to the will of the supreme manager, and whatever part He assigns us, whether star, or tree, or the bump on the log, we must tackle it with patience, and work ahead with content. And patience with God is the secret, and charity or fondness for God is sweet mother to sweet patience.

We must be patient with ourselves, a thing altogether impossible without genuine charity. We all

love ourselves, and love ourselves intensely. We are patient with ourselves when we most deserve condemnation, we have an excuse ready for our most glaring mistakes, and we actually wonder on occasions why people presume to censure what we most admire in our character. We love ourselves well but not wisely. We go to extremes in the matter, and so offend reason or common-sense. Sometimes we sin by excess, sometimes by defect; but always with the same result, progress towards sadness. Exaggerated self-love betrays itself in a readiness to defy law and duty, when they stand between us and pleasure, or comfort, or ease. We never love ourselves too much without paying the penalty of remorse, and remorse is sadness. The sadness of remorse is beyond the reach of patience, it is without remedy, and must simply be endured. It is the penalty attaching to sin, and virtuous patience must have play before sin puts in an appearance. The one way to avoid this sadness is to avoid sin, and patience with ourselves is an immense help to the avoidance of sin. When passion urges us towards wrong, the absence of the good we covet assumes in our eyes the proportions of an impending evil, and sadness is a near menace. This is the sadness patience must cure, and right love of self must encourage us to hold to duty in face of the seeming evil consequent on self-denial. Therefore, we cannot sin by excess in the matter of loving ourselves, unless we first lose patience and yield to the sadness arising from thought of our pitiable plight without the gratification temptation promises. Therefore, as long as we love ourselves just

enough, within the bounds of law and order, so long are we going to be patient with the ills of self-denial, and so escape the sadness sinners experience in time of trial. And so sweet charity is mother again to sweet patience.

Sometimes we sin by defect in this business of loving ourselves. Devout souls, in their eagerness to cancel past offenses by contrition and sorrow, go to extremes, and on no few occasions love themselves too little. It might be harsh to call their folly a sin; but at any rate it is a serious mistake, and may have disastrous consequences in the spiritual order. We must love ourselves whether we are saints or sinners; we must be patient with ourselves whether free from faults and imperfections or covered with them. And this is the secret of due or measured contrition for sin, the kind in favor with Mary Magdalen and St. Peter. Their contrition never halted them in their onward march towards God, it never tempted them to waste hours in profitless sorrow, it never provoked them to leave off work for the purpose of indulging the luxury of idle grief. No doubt a glance at our past lives can fill us with confusion; when on the way to confession, with the misdemeanors of a week fresh in our memory, we are evil in our own eyes; and when evil is near, sadness is a menace, unless patience checks the rising emotion. We must, therefore, be patient with ourselves, even when most disappointing; and judicious or well regulated love for ourselves in these sad circumstances can help us towards the attitude. We can reflect that God is patient with our shortcomings, and we cannot

be far wrong when we imitate Him. We can pity our weaknesses as we should pity a neighbor's, and refrain from breaking our spirit with excessive reproaches.

There is a sadness unto death as well as a sadness unto life. Despair itself is only an exaggerated form of sadness. There is an unholy as well as a holy sadness. One is a passion, rooted in the senses and in appetite, the other is a movement or activity of the mind and will. Holy sadness leaves its owner in quiet possession of peace and happiness; the other overwhelms its victim with turbulence and noisy confusion. Whatever sadness checks progress in the service of God, is unholy; whatever sadness diminishes enthusiasm for the right, is unholy; whatever sadness induces us to give over effort or approach the work of God without headlong courage, is unholy. Our past sins have worked havoc enough in our lives without allowing them to extend their ravages into the present and future. Instead of losing time in barren grief, we must recover lost ground by steady advances; and sadness is a weight on our feet. It ought to be possible to mourn our offenses without yielding to discouragement, it ought to be possible to feel sorry without experiencing sadness; and the patience counselled by charity towards self can perhaps put us in possession of the secret. And so charity is again mother to sweet patience, and the sinner's securest refuge against the baneful effects of sadness. Patience, therefore, is the daughter of charity, whether the sadness it banishes is a menace from God's providence or a menace from our worse selves.

And St. Paul is summing up a truth as salutary as it is comprehensive, when he tells us that charity is patient. But God and ourselves are not the cause of all our worry. Our neighbors are a constant incentive to wrong. Sit down, think the matter over, and you must soon acknowledge that most of our trouble with the neighbor is due to the fact that we love him too much or too little. We ought to love him as we love ourselves, and we love him more or we love him less than we love ourselves. However, excessive fondness for the neighbor, while a possible affliction, is no common disease with mortals, and we can afford to neglect it for the present. It is too much opposed to the instincts of human nature ever to become fashionable; and humanitarians, disciples of a purely natural religion, who as a matter of fact damn their own souls in a mad desire to benefit the bodies of others, never make the mistake of preferring the neighbor before themselves. Their own souls are of as small account as their neighbors', all souls are in their eyes mere nothings, and bodies alone are worth while. They minister to the wants of others out of their superfluous monies, and would reckon it silly to shorten their own meals just to provide abundant dinners for the poor. They remain always a little kinder to their own bodies than they are to the bodies of others; and, as charity with them is never more than a matter of food, and drink, and raiment, and general physical or intellectual comfort, excessive fondness for the neighbor is no sin of theirs. But too little love for the neighbor is a common weakness of mankind. Selfishness is so imbedded

in our nature that the perfect as well as the imperfect are awfully prone to stinginess or worse in the matter of loving their neighbors. And just as patience can help us to love God as we ought to love Him, just as patience can help us to love ourselves as we ought to love ourselves, so patience can enable us to love our neighbors as we ought to love them. Charity is patient, says St. Paul; patience means no selfishness, and no selfishness means no envy, no pride, no ambition. No envy means no joy in another's evil, no sinister thought or rash judgment. No pride means no perverse dealing, no quarrel, no mockery, no scolding. No ambition means no anger. Patience therefore kills selfishness from the soul, and the soul dead to selfish instincts is an utter stranger to envy, pride, ambition. Envy, pride, ambition are capital enemies to love for the neighbor, they prove us less fond of the neighbor than we ought to be. Patience with the neighbor is remedy for these several ills; patience is born of charity; and so again charity is mother to all the virtues.

III

CHARITY AND ENVY

"Charity envieth not." I Corinthians, 13, 4.

1. CHARITY is patient, patience is medicine for sadness; and, if in the words of St. Paul patience likewise cures envy, pride and ambition, these several vices must have something in common with sadness. Sadness, we saw, is that emotion provoked in the soul when overtaken by present evil; and envy, pride and ambition are but manifestations of sadness. All three are sins against charity, with one or another species of sadness or impatience for origin. All three are stirred by the view we take of our neighbors' excellences or good qualities. When in my own esteem my neighbor is my superior, when I cannot help acknowledging that he has certain good qualities I myself lack, envy is in order; and his wealth in good, because a constant reminder of my poverty, hurries me towards that sadness which is inseparable from the approach of evil. Envy, therefore, in a very few words is sadness at another's good; and all its malice is rooted in the circumstance that, if we loved our neighbor as we love ourselves, we should rejoice in his possession of good, and not pine away with grief because of his superiority. When in my own esteem my neighbor is my inferior, when I cannot help seeing that I possess certain good qualities denied

him, pride is in order ; and my wealth in good, as compared with his poverty, hurries me towards that sadness inseparable from the evil resident in his refusal to acknowledge my superiority and do it full and complete homage. Pride, therefore, in a very few words, is sadness prompted by the thought that my excellences or good qualities go without due recognition or applause. When in my own esteem my neighbor is my equal, when I cannot help noting that I possess all the good qualities he possesses, ambition is in order ; and the humiliation involved in the acknowledgment of a successful rival becomes a source of annoyance, an ever present evil, and tempts me to sadness. Ambition, therefore, in a very few words is a species of grief, wherein, little content with equality, we miss the added excellence of superiority.

2. Nearly all the unrest current in the world is due to envy, pride, ambition ; and men's selfishness is responsible for the trouble. Nations as well as individuals are open to this triple madness ; and every war in history is a sickening tribute to the sad havoc it can work in the world. Nations are only individuals on a colossal scale, the passions of rulers are usually reflected in the hearts of their subjects ; and when envy, pride, ambition actuate a government, the evil is multiplied a million times, and it culminates in the wholesale and wanton destruction of property, life and all the splendid fruits of civilization. Charity is the supreme remedy for war, because charity alone or well regulated love for mankind can make a people patient with its own share of prosperity, and keep it from envy when

surrounded by powerful neighbors, from pride when all its neighbors round are weaker or less fortunate, and from ambition when on terms of equality with the rest of the world. And till Christian morality prevails everywhere, till the spirit of the Gospel exerts a universal sway, war is destined forever to continue our race's crowning curse and the scourge of nations.

3. Sadness at another's good is the cause of envy, and growth in sadness is envy's result. The saddest mortal this earth knows is the man who allows his heart to fall a prey to envy. The very means he takes to cure himself only aggravates his disease; and, when poison is fed to the sick by way of medicine, death is not far distant. The right remedy for envy is patience, the patience that finishes in joy at another's good, the patience charity counsels, enabling the philosopher of God to enjoy with thankfulness his own smaller share of prosperity, and honestly rejoice at every addition made the happiness of his neighbor. Charity is right only when we love our neighbor as we love ourselves; and men of charity have a divine way of confounding their own with the neighbor's good, and deriving genuine delight from every new accession to the neighbor's prosperity. Charity makes my neighbor a second self, his good is my good; and nobody but a fool reckons his own increased prosperity an incentive to sadness.

Envy is not jealousy, though the two have family resemblances. Envy is sadness, and men are sad only when evil is upon them. When evil is distant, it pro-

vokes fear or dread rather than sadness; and on this account jealousy is nearer akin to fear than to sadness. Jealousy, therefore, is fear of being supplanted by a rival in another's affection; and it is as much an enemy to charity as envy itself. Readiness to share one's friends with others is a beautiful virtue; and, because friends are a rarer possession than wealth, this readiness on occasions is perhaps more annoying to self-love than whatsoever other form of generosity. And, at the risk of repeating, I again call your attention to the sublime lesson in this virtue suggested by the mystery of the Child's loss in the temple. The lesson is set forth at some length on pages 130 and 131.

4. Because envy is sadness and not fear, it must not be confounded with that dread of harm apt to oppress us when an enemy's elevation puts him in a position to work us injury. True and proper envy is always a sin, and this dread attendant on an enemy's superior position can exist without a suspicion of sin. Envy must not be confounded with that spirit of zeal which prompts us to admire the good in others and strive towards resemblance with our betters. "*Æmulamini meliora*," "Be zealous for the better gifts," is St. Paul's own advice; and we are nowhere forbidden to have high ideals. We must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. High ideals are a tonic for activity, and saints take and keep the resolution to copy into their own lives whatever of good they discover in others. This habit of high ideals, far from encouraging sadness, arouses enthusiasm and energy. The indignation stirred at sight of the apparent unfairness with which

providence scatters ills and blessings in the world, is an altogether different emotion from envy. It is more like anger than sadness; and, because an indirect reproach to God or an indictment of His fairness, must be studiously avoided. The prosperity of the wicked in this present life ceases to be an enigma, when with David we go into the sanctuary of the Lord, appreciate the empty nature of earthly goods, and understand concerning the last end of the wicked. The lessons death teaches can settle every such disquieting doubt. The adversity of the just is no mystery, when with St. Paul we reflect on the eternal weight of glory the momentary and light tribulations of this life work unto the elect.

5. Genuine envy grieves at the neighbor's good, views it in much the same light as we view personal ill health or misfortune; and all its malice is resident in the single fact that to be true to charity we must rejoice and not grieve at the neighbor's good. The neighbor's superiority stirs envy. The man lower down is envious of the man higher up, and regularly the distance between the two is not discouragingly great. When his head is right, a peasant hardly envies a king, a pauper hardly envies a millionaire. Every such process would be silly, and envy from the view-point of simple reason is not silly. Envy keeps hoping that the man higher up will descend to our own level or lower. At any rate it agrees to remain sad till the change happens. In the meantime the victim of envy exerts every endeavor to hasten the levelling process, and drag his enemy down from his high pedestal.

Two effective ways suggest themselves, and St. Paul must have had them in mind when he wrote that the patience of charity means no joy in another's evil, and no sinister thought or rash judgment. The envious hail with delight any loss suffered by the object of their envy. Whatever harm befalls the man higher up operates to dethrone him, and spells new gratification for the man lower down. Every mistake he makes, every affront done him, every humiliation he encounters, every disappointment happening his way, make him that much poorer in good, put him that much closer to the man who envies, and awake corresponding pleasure in the heart of envy's slave. When the man higher up meets with no reverses, envy has recourse to sinister thoughts. It calls to its aid suspicion, rash judgment and other dishonest methods. It belittles the enemy's achievements, ascribes to him unworthy motives, conjures up a host of faults, to which he is an utter stranger. When facts proclaim the neighbor's superiority, envy seeks a refuge in lies, and tries to cheat itself into thinking that the neighbor's good qualities are downright misdemeanors, or empty hallucinations of the fancy.

6. The victim of envy, a prey to consuming sadness, knows his distemper, and feels all the weight of his misery. Patience is the one right remedy for his disease, and he knows it. When envy threatens, common-sense as well as charity counsels patience. But passion blinds envy's victim to the truth; and in a mad and vain endeavor to hurt the neighbor he hurts himself alone. He substitutes for patience joy in an-

other's evil and sinister thoughts or rash judgment; and his sadness grows, instead of yielding to treatment. The neighbor loses no single good quality because of his satanic gladness, and his twisted judgment hurts the neighbor's character only in his own muddy mind. Charity exhorts him to love his neighbor as he loves himself, to count his neighbor a second self; and common-sense adds its voice and suffrage to charity. We impute no fault to ourselves except on the clearest evidence, we have excuses ready for our most flagrant mistakes, and our failures are no comfort to our thoughts. And if our neighbor were a second self, his faults, mistakes and failures would impress us in much the same way as our own. Nobody but extols his own achievements to the skies, nobody but ascribes to himself the highest of motives, nobody but repudiates with the utmost vehemence baseless imputations of wrong; and if our neighbor were a second self, his achievements, his motives, his character would be as safe in our hands as our own. When we rejoice in our neighbor's good, we vindicate to ourselves a share in his glory; and it is well worth remembering that the rule works the other way about. When we rejoice in our neighbor's evil, we inherit some large or small measure of his shame. When the neighbor stands trial in our court, we ought to, as far as possible, see good in evil, and let him easily off. It is the treatment we mercifully accord ourselves, and my neighbor is my second self. When unable to excuse his deeds, we can always acquit him on the plea of right motives. If the wickedness of his motives is too evident to miss, we can at

least suspend sentence, and with St. Paul, “judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall every man have praise from God.” I Cor. 4, 5.

IV

CHARITY AND PRIDE

“Charity is not puffed up.” I Corinthians, 13, 4.

WE want to return to St. Paul and charity, and to freshen our memory we must recall the substance of the apostle's words. He ascribes fifteen different qualities to charity; two of them general, eight negative, and five positive. Charity, he says, is patient, charity is kind. Charity means no envy, no selfishness, no sinister thought, no joy in another's evil; no pride, no perverse dealing; no ambition, no anger. Charity rejoices in another's good, bears all, believes all, hopes all, endures all. Patience embraces the negative qualities of charity; kindness, its positive qualities; and we were busy on a former occasion with this virtue of patience. It is corrective of envy, pride and ambition, the three capital enemies to charity; and we already discussed at some length its bearing on envy. Its bearing on pride and ambition now demands our attention, and this is burden of our present talk. Therefore, we want to become better acquainted with the divine philosophy or wisdom responsible for the statement that charity is not puffed up and is not ambitious, that patience secures charity against these faults. Pride and ambition are vices against charity that must be cured by patience. Superiority in the

neighbor provokes envy, inferiority in the neighbor provokes pride, and equality in the neighbor is a constant incentive to ambition. And sadness is quick to result from any indulgence of the three crooked emotions. Patience is remedy, charity counsels patience; and charity is again sweet mother to the sweet virtues opposed to envy, pride, and ambition. We must be patient with the neighbor, whether viewed as our superior, our inferior, or our equal, and so escape the sadness consequent on impatience with his greatness, his littleness and his equality; and charity, or the fixed purpose to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, can help us to the habit.

The Latin word for pride, *superbia*, is a clear and fair exposition of its nature. *Super* means above or beyond the measure established by reason or right common-sense, and the proud man is eaten with a desire to seem greater than he really is. Pride was the mistake made by the fallen angels. Their proper place was under God, and they wanted to rule in His stead. Pride was the mistake made by our first parents. Their proper attitude was obedience to God, and they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree in defiance of God's prohibition. Aman's sadness at Mardochai's refusal to bend his knee in homage, is a remarkable instance of the mad lengths to which pride whips its victim. He counted all his wealth, all his prestige nothing as long as the humble Jew Mardochai withheld what he considered his rightful due, the empty acknowledgment of a bow; and, to avenge the insult, he contemplated the wholesale slaughter of a nation. And this is the

sadness from which the patience of charity must defend us, when persuaded that the neighbor is our inferior, the sadness attaching to want of flattery's recognition. If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we shall experience no longing for such tokens of esteem; and their absence will create no void in our lives. Equality is love's atmosphere, and peers or equals make firmest friends. Pride is the denial of charity, because, when the mind once votes the neighbor inferior, the heart finds it impossible to give the neighbor what love we lavish on ourselves. In these circumstances pity is possible, but not love. Superior and inferior of their very nature demand different degrees of affection. True charity removes the difference by sweeping distinctions aside. The man of charity with the help of interior modesty prefers everybody before himself, and esteems all his superiors. And this process does no violence to the truth. On the contrary, all pride is a most palpable lie. Saint Gregory enumerates four species of pride, and all four are wide departures from the truth. It is rank self-deception to think that our good qualities are the work of our own hands, and no gifts of God; to think that, though gifts of God, they are debts due our personal activities. It is the plainest kind of a lie to boast ourselves owners of qualities we do not possess, or make our virtues an excuse for despising others. By the grace of God we are what we are, God's gifts are free; and the neighbor we despise would perhaps, with the helps accorded us, be whole worlds better than ourselves.

Pride therefore is a lie, and God hates pride as only

the eternal truth can hate a lie. It is a foul smell in God's nostrils, and an abomination in the eyes of men. Pride may be a trifle till it attacks God or harms the neighbor. Then it assumes all the horrid proportions of the sin of the angels or of Good Friday's awful crime, and some terrible punishment is in near waiting. The pride that assails God regularly results in apostasy from religion, and next to hell itself God can visit crime with no heavier condemnation than with loss of faith and loss of His love. Intellectual pride is responsible for half the army of unbelievers in the world, the other half is made up of thieves, demagogues and devotees of pleasure. The heads of proud men and women in the world are swollen to such an extent by their progress in scientific knowledge that they impudently rate themselves independent of Almighty God, and treat the authority of His Church with contempt and disrespect. These men and women occupy in God's providence a more hopeless position than the lost tribes of Israel. The sun of God's justice has set on them, and to all appearances it has set forever. Because the darkness is not complete, because their patched up creeds possess some small measure of the light of the Gospel, they are not honest searchers for the truth, and they go down to their fate eminently well satisfied with themselves and their errors. When pride assails the neighbor, it regularly results in the alienation of friends and in a species of universal abandonment. A proud man invites the hatred of others. He has qualities that make him peculiarly the target of dislike.

St. Paul sums up his trouble in the one word, perverse dealing. In his own eyes everybody is his inferior, and he has a thousand ways of impressing the fact on his neighbor's mind. His one purpose in life is to remind others of their vassalage and subjection. He disputes every statement made in his presence, he mocks and ridicules others, he criticizes and scolds from early morning till late at night.

In conversation he is Sir Oracle, and no dog must bark when he opens his mouth to deliver himself of wisdom. All his neighbors are dunces, nobody else in the world has a right to think, and in his company all must be docile pupils, nobody must presume to be a teacher. He loses patience with the ignorance of others, and falls into a fit because they will not learn at his hands. He never argues, that the truth may appear, but that he may seem to be his opponent's superior. And a world of discomfort is created in community by dispositions of the kind. Wise men, when they reflect what a small difference it makes whether their opinion prevails or not, keep clear of wordy disputes, and scorn to purchase a reputation for forensic ability at the expense of peace and happiness. There is plenty of room in the world for everybody's opinion, quarrels of the kind usually turn on trifles; and if I have the truth, and my neighbor refuses to take it, he is the only person hurt, and I have no right to complain or feel uneasy.

But in no particular, perhaps, is pride more manifest than in the mean habit of ridicule and mockery. The first requisite for the indulgence of this base prac-

tice is intimate persuasion about the inferiority of its victim. Men, as a rule, never mock or ridicule persons they consider their superiors or equals. To make sport of a superior or equal calls for more courage than proud cowards possess; and they are slow to pain whatever neighbor can strike back. To practice this fiendish accomplishment with security, they single out some quiet, unobtrusive individual, either unable or unwilling to return the insult in kind; and the very affectation of superiority implied in mockery and ridicule, is a virtual declaration of their victim's inferiority. And this one circumstance is what hurts most in the experience. You cannot be patient under the affliction without paying silent tribute to your tormentor's supremacy; and some characters are that high-strung they cannot with any degree of comfort submit to the humiliation of being pitied. Mockery and ridicule are weapons of torture employed by proud minds to wring from others acknowledgment of their loftiness; and like contentious wrangling, they work a world of discomfort in community. They are too vile to be even touched by saints or manly men. When one man strikes another the other can with dignity retaliate in kind. When one man mocks another, the other is powerless, and must swallow his grief in silence. He cannot stoop to the meanness of so vile a thing as mockery, and his persecutor goes unpunished. To steady us in bitter experiences of the kind, to fill us with disgust for the meanness, Christ in Herod's palace submitted a whole night long to treatment of the sort. Our neighbors in religion sometimes

do us the unkindness, and memory of Christ before Herod can keep us from doing murder. We do others the same unkindness, and memory of Christ before Herod can help us to forget the wretched habit.

Pride likewise hurts charity by its everlasting fondness for harsh criticism. The proud are self constituted censors of the world, and they quite forget the more amiable half of their duty. They confound criticism with fault finding, and oftener than not they see faults where others see virtues. It has always seemed to me that a judicious critic is more at pains to discover and praise the beautiful features in a piece of work, than to find and blame its blemishes; and pupils are more encouraged by a word of commendation from their teacher than by incessant reproaches. Certainly men of charity are always on the alert and eager for the good of their neighbors, blind to the evil in their character, and never without an excuse for the most palpable mistake in their conduct. Praise is sweeter mediciné than blame, on most occasions it is not a whit less effective, and no real good comes of tormenting ourselves and others. The proud man is on a pedestal of his own making, all the world lives and moves in a lower plane, and inability to see good in others settles like a curse on his thoughts. Hence he is condemned by his own folly to the miserable lot of the man in mythology with a bad smell tied forever to his nose, and a bad taste forever imprisoned in his mouth. Patience could cure his distemper, but patience and pride never dwell together in the same house,

they are as deadly enemies as charity and pride; and when one moves in, the other moves out.

Humility is even a more effective remedy for pride than patience, because it completely eradicates the disease from the system. Patience exerts itself in face of pride's endeavors to excite sadness in the soul, and simply nullifies without destroying pride's deleterious influence. Humility kills pride to the root, and putting its owner in quiet possession of peace and contentment, makes sadness an impossibility, and removes all need of patience. Therefore with a view to growth in charity, we ought to be even more solicitous about humility than about patience; and these several considerations can help us to a fondness for the virtue of humility.

Humility is the truth, humility is a foretaste of Heaven, humility is pledge and guarantee of Heaven's happiness.

Humility is the truth. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." St. Matthew, 11, 29. Humility is an abiding consciousness of God's majesty and our own worthlessness. Reason is emphatic in its declaration of God's infinite perfections. It is no less emphatic in its declaration of man's general worthlessness. In the words of St. Luke, "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." St. Luke, 17, 10. To God we owe all we have and possess. He who works for another, to whom he owes everything, tries only to pay his debts. As a matter of fact, we can never cancel the debts we con-

tracted with God. God in pity accepts from us what is already His own. Profit means excess of gain over capital invested. Profit means money put in the merchant's pocket by the profitable commodity. We add nothing to God's capital. God is no richer when we do our duty than He was before we did our duty. The servant who renders his master service due by a thousand titles, who gives his master only what belongs to him by the clearest kind of right, can by a stretch of language be called a useful servant. He cannot be called a profitable servant. Reason, therefore, teaches that humility is man's only proper attitude, and reason is truth. Pride is a lie, and a sin against common-sense as well as against God's law. Pride is a discordant note in the song of thanksgiving nature raises day and night to its Creator. It is an offensive odor in God's nostrils, a hideous thing in men's eyes.

Humility is a foretaste of Heaven. "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." St. John, 17, 3. From these words of St. John it is evident that the practical knowledge or imitation of Jesus Christ is eternal life on earth. Humility is the salient feature in Christ's character. Everywhere in the gospels the humble Jesus insists on calling Himself the Son of man. The Royal Prophet, impersonating the Messiah, says of himself, "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." Psalms, 21, 7. Since therefore the imitation of Jesus is a Heaven on earth, and since Jesus singles out His lowliness for our imitation, humility must be the hidden

secret of man's happiness here below. Reason again comes to the aid of Scripture. Heaven is peace and peace is absence of restlessness and strife. Opposition breeds strife. The humble have no enemies to contend with. The humble, like the chaste, are beloved of God and men. The humble set their hearts on sitting in the last and lowest place; and men are not wont to push and jostle their neighbors for a seat in the last row. The pushing is all up front. There is always plenty of room at the back; and the world is not yet so full of saints that there is danger of crowding. Restlessness is born of dissatisfaction with our surroundings. The humble are utter strangers to dissatisfaction. Harsh words are a royal feast for them. Lowly offices come to them in the garb of gilt edged blessings. When disappointed in their fondest hopes, when crossed in their choicest expectations, they are happy with the thought that things are at last coming their way, and that the burden of their prayers has reached God's ears at last.

Humility is a pledge of Heaven. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name, which is above all names: That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth." Philipp. 2, 7. St. Paul here ascribes to humility Christ's entrance into Heaven and all the glory He left behind Him on earth. Our title to this twofold honor, eternal rest in the bosom

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of God and the veneration of brothers in the faith, must be won by flawless holiness of life. Only saints enter Heaven, only saints are inscribed on the Church's roll of fame. Sanctity in the case of Christ was compassed by ignominy and humility. We must attain to sanctity by the same means. A thousand dark ways lead to hell. Heaven knows only one road, the royal road of the cross. And since the cross breathes of malefactors, since it was a mode of death set apart by law for the lowest class of criminals, no man with a spark of pride in his bosom is going to willingly get under its weight; no man ambitious of a great name upon earth is going to tarry long in its shadow. Pride, therefore, must be stamped upon till it smoulders and dies. Ambition must be either headed in the right direction or parted company with and forgotten. If humility is a pledge of Heaven, pride, the badge of demons, is a passport to hell; and pride has reaped many a harvest of lost souls since that dread hour in which a third of Heaven's angels fell, since that sad hour in which a race's parents threw away a race's splendid birthright.

V

CHARITY, AMBITION AND ANGER

"Charity is not ambitious, is not provoked to anger." I
Corinthians, 13, 5.

ST. PAUL keeps ambition and anger together, and impatience with equals provokes both emotions. Anger itself is a desire of open revenge for an open insult or slight. It is confined to equals, because slight from a superior is impossible, slight from an inferior is unworthy of notice. Honor is due from equals, and when equals refuse it, they do somebody a slight. Patience is remedy, because ambition and anger provoke sadness, and patience is medicine for sadness; charity counsels patience, and, therefore, charity is mother to the virtue opposed to ambition and anger.

Ambition is desire of honor. Honor in turn is that tribute of reverence, respect, esteem we pay another's good qualities or excellences. It is the basis of fame, *notitia cum laude*, that quality in virtue of which a man's praises are commensurate with his acquaintance. There is a right ambition as well as a wrong ambition; there is a right anger as well as a wrong anger. To despise honor altogether is only a little less dangerous than ravenously to seek it. Never to grow indignant can happen to have worse consequences than to live in a turmoil of rage. Contempt for honor means

death to high ideals, and with high ideals gone, tepidity in the service of God is almost sure to follow. We religious of the active life need ambition and plenty of it. We are agents of the Most High, ambassadors of the King; we are adventurers embarked in the grandest of enterprises; and we are pledged and sworn to give the best that is in us to the work of saving ourselves and others. Whether teachers or workers about the house, whether in command or under obedience, whether officers in the army or soldiers in the ranks, we must ambition a species of excellence in our several callings able to rank us above whatever teachers or workers or mixers the world ever knew. We cannot yield to others in point of glory without hurting the cause of God; and we must die rather than let the stigma of inferiority settle on our colors. Other teachers may surpass us in ability, no teacher must distance us in good-will or industry. Ability is not altogether within our control, it hinges on a variety of causes, and we must be content with the small or large measure God sees fit to bestow. Good-will and industry can be hampered by no outside agency, they are wholly dependent on our single selves, and on this very account a fairer standard of man's or woman's worth than results. Nor will results be wanting, if our heart is in our work. They were not wanting in the past, they are not wanting now, and the world is agreed that religious teachers, no matter how handicapped in point of school equipment, are far and away superior to secular teachers in the world's own chosen field of purely human knowledge. In the field of

divine knowledge, in the field of moral development, in the business of true and genuine education, secular teachers are simply no rivals of ours, because they are forbidden by law and unfitted by their training to even touch the higher questions of God, morality and religion. We must stand to the work of Catholic education with enthusiasm. Enthusiasm means push, it means interest, it means the expenditure of every unit of energy at the agent's disposal.

Ambition is no harm when God or the salvation of souls is its motive, because all the honor accrues, not to the worker, but to God and the neighbor. Ambition is no harm when growth in holiness is its motive, because, though the honor accrues to the saint himself, God has His own share in results, and greed of holiness is the one species of selfishness stamped with the seal of God's approval. We religious are barred every other avenue to fame. Holiness is the one legitimate ambition open to us for endeavor, because it is our destiny in life, the single purpose to which we can without insulting common-sense devote our entire being, all our faculties and whatever we can call our own, time, talent, health, wealth, everything. Had we remained in the world, we could have disputed place with captains of industry in the realms of finance, we could have contended for supremacy in the world of fashion with society's leaders, we could have posed for the applause of the world as consummate educators. Had we remained in the world, any one of these several pursuits could have been made a hobby; but in becoming religious we cut loose from the trifles of time and sealed

ourselves to virtue, the only good in the world with an intimate and necessary bearing on eternity. Honor with us is not the clap-trap of a demagogue, and we refuse to measure a man's worth by the standard accepted among thieves and felons. A seat on a throne just vacated by an idiotic minion of Satan is no sure sign of intrinsic dignity. Cæsar in the senate nodding to a herd of slaves is less a hero in our eyes than magnanimous Job seated on a dung-hill with utter ruin for company. As we read history, Napoleon was a demon till, seated on the seashore at Helena, he wept bitter tears for wrongs done the Church and rights wrested from God's vicar on earth. We would not exchange a rag of the tattered garments that clung to the emaciated form of Lazarus at the door of the rich man's house for all the crowns melted down, for all the royal robes moths have ever eaten. In our catechism virtue is man's one worthy ambition, immunity from contact with sin is the summit of our aspirations. Personal holiness is the only jewel we can call our own. No other good this life can boast is completely within our control. Heaven may deny me that tact and talent needed to touch heights my swelling spirit ambitions. A jealous rival, an unthinking friend can without fault of mine forever unfit me for fame, can cut from under my feet the road to wealth, wisdom and glory. But no power on earth, no power in hell can prevent me from becoming a saint. The road to Heaven is kept by God; and no rival, no friend can cut it from under the bleeding feet that press it.

We must be less afraid of ambition, and more afraid

of laziness. The soul is what makes the difference between a dead man and a live one; and enthusiasm is what makes the difference between a dead soul and a live soul. A soul without enthusiasm is practically dead and buried; and enthusiasm without ambition is worse than dead, it is impossible to think. It is a journey to go, with no road beyond; it is a mountain to climb, in a land of level plains. We must be no strangers in Jerusalem among our brothers and sisters. We must take an interest in things. We must be busy with the work of our own perfection, hammering ourselves into shape for the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, and employing the time left over in works of obedience for the neighbor. We must be mindful of mutual help, giving our brothers and sisters next place to God in our thoughts, spreading the sunshine, dispelling the clouds, laboring to make life in religion a paradise for its patrons, and scorning to harass with discomfort men and women obliged by their vocation to spend their lives in our company. Our heart must be in our work. We must love labor, grow fonder and fonder of fatigue, spend ourselves, wear ourselves out in the service of souls. The world is full of souls to be saved, all the children entrusted to our care are voices clamoring for assistance; and we must heed the call, we must people the Kingdom with the little men and the little women snatched from destruction by the ministry of word, work and example. The convent was never meant to be a refuge for idleness. Life in religion is the most strenuous of occupations. Every hour of the day and night has its own set duty, and

opportunities for zeal are more abundant than time's minutes or jumps of the hands on the face of the clock. We must not stand among the brethren with our arms hanging listlessly at our side, our mouth wide open, in an attitude of supine inactivity. We must stand like Saul, head and shoulders over everybody, we must be bent bows, always going or ready to go, engines with a full supply of steam, live wires at high tension.

And everything said of ambition is in the main true of anger. More harm is wrought by untimely meekness than by seasonable anger. There is a time to be angry, as well as a time to be meek. God is God when He smites His enemies with fire and sword as well as when He welcomes the repentant home and dispenses pardon. God is talking in the words, Vengeance is mine, as well as in the words, I will not the death of the sinner. Christ is God when whipping the traffickers from the temple as well as when mute and silent in the judgment-hall of Caiphas. Anger becomes a solemn duty when meekness threatens order, just as disobedience is an obligation when authority urges the commission of sin. Meekness degenerates to cowardice when the occasion calls for just indignation and anger. Catholics are poltroons when they allow without protest any outsider to insult their Church or its practices. We share in men's crimes when our silence encourages them to assail truth and virtue. People in authority must be as conversant with righteous anger as with methods of meekness. The judge who always acquits has learned only half his business.

Parents are to blame before God for habits they failed to correct in their children by judicious use of the rod. Superiors must keep vigilant watch against the entrance of abuses into religion, against flagrant violation of rule, against any relaxation of spirit or of strict observance. Teachers are fools to let pupils usurp or despise their authority in the class-room. Boys and girls are there to learn, to accustom themselves to discipline and self-control, to fit themselves for places of trust and prominence in family, Church and state; and the teacher who allows them to waste their time, to follow their own bent and inclination, to school themselves into habits of idleness, dishonesty and general worthlessness, is doing his pupils a heavy wrong, and is making a hollow mockery of his sacred profession. The good teacher insists on the deepest kind of silence, and the exactest kind of order. He is sovereign king in the class-room; and, unless he manages with a strong hand, a few turbulent spirits may shorten his efficiency and deprive willing subjects of advantages they themselves are too dull to appreciate. A little anger tempered with prudence proves on occasions most salutary medicine for exuberant youngsters; and, even when force is resorted to, the small harm done their feelings is more than compensated for by the push they get in the right direction.

Therefore, ambition and anger are not always and everywhere the horrid things they are generally reckoned; and whatever may be true of private citizens in their own individual capacity, apostles and teachers need a certain large measure of ambition and anger to

succeed in their work of bringing souls to God and training the undisciplined young to habits of industry, study and self-improvement. Ambition is wrong only when it offends against reason, and disturbs order. In last analysis ambition is desire of honor, the wish to have others, chiefly equals, pay our good qualities the homage of recognition and esteem. All our good qualities are from God. Whatever esteem they deserve, therefore, belongs to God, and when a man disputes ownership with God, he is at odds with right reason, he is disorderly, he is decidedly wrong. The ambition, therefore, that fails to refer everything to God is a sin, and it usually meets with condign punishment even in this life. The demagogue's career is a dismal round of days without peace and nights empty of slumber, and the seas of crime and slaughter waded through to attain high places are able to disgust the wise, and allure saints to the hidden vales of obscurity and retirement. Wrong ambition scruples not to employ crooked methods, and it seldom or never escapes heavy penalties. Besides, whatever good qualities we possess were never meant by God to contribute to our personal comfort alone, but to the promotion of His glory and to the spiritual profit of our neighbors. Saints take this precaution, and seek honor only with a view to God's advantage and the neighbor's. Demagogues, on the contrary, are too self-centred to take God or the neighbor into account, and they rest contentedly in the esteem of men, as though virtue had no higher reward than honor, as though honor had no higher purpose than self. To consider honor a full

and complete reward for virtue, is to make virtue cheap indeed, and altogether despise its true worth. Virtue deserves God, the beatific vision in Heaven; and when men reward virtue with honor, far from satisfying its claims, they are only paying it the highest reward within reach of their limited capacity. Right ambition is the virtue of high-minded and great-souled heroes in the service of God, and it is responsible for all the grand and glorious achievements spread on the pages of our Church's history. It animated the apostles and their successors to carry salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth. It animated Xavier and missionaries of his stamp to cross the seas, to live, labor and die among strangers for the salvation of souls. It animated you and it animated me to lock ourselves up in solitude, to work as no slave ever worked, to wear ourselves out in the service of God's little ones. Charity condemns unrighteous ambition, it lauds righteous ambition to the skies. Charity lives of ambition, love lives of enthusiasm, and holiness is love of God and love of man carried to a sublime extravagance.

Anger is wrong only when opposed to right reason, and destructive of order. There is an anger of zeal as well as an anger of passion. One is a virtue worthy of God Himself, the other is a sin and characteristic of demons and beasts. Envy is sadness at another's good, and is always wrong. Anger is desire of revenge, and depends for its morality on the nature of the revenge it desires. St. John Chrysostom says, "To be angry without a reason is wrong, to be angry

with a reason is right. Without anger education falls, courts are of no avail, and crime enjoys a holiday." Anger is no sin when zeal is its motive, and due measure is kept. Zeal is its motive when it purposes God's glory or the neighbor's good. Due measure is kept when excess and defect are avoided. Anger can be too gentle as well as too vehement. Due measure is forgotten when we desire to punish a person who deserves no punishment, when we desire to punish a person beyond his deserts, when we contemplate wrong methods of punishment, when we neglect the legitimate purpose of punishment, the preservation of justice and the correction of faults. When controlled by reason anger is no passion. It is an exercise of judgment, and all passion is an affair of the senses. Even when wrong, anger is a lesser evil than hatred or envy. Hatred is worse than envy, envy is worse than anger; because hatred wishes harm to the neighbor any old way, envy wishes harm to the neighbor with a view to self-advantage, anger wishes harm to the neighbor with a view to the preservation of justice or the promotion of righteousness. St. Gregory makes anger the mother of six daughters, and their right to the title can be a matter for study to the curious. They are indignation and disturbance of mind; noise, blasphemy, and abusive speech, and quarrels. Anger in the heart gives birth to the first two; anger on the tongue to the next three; and anger in action is responsible for the last. Charity counsels ambition and anger of the right kind, it denounces ambition and anger of the wrong kind. We cannot love God above all, we cannot

love our neighbor as ourselves without being ambitious, without being angry when occasion calls for enthusiasm and vengeance. Low ideals are poison to progress, unseasonable meekness on the part of God's friends nourishes neglect, encourages crime, and putting a premium on wickedness, makes good men bad and bad men worse. Wrong ambition tramples the rights of others, defies all the laws of God and men, and plunges the world in war and woe. Wrong anger inflicts unnecessary and undeserved pain, it is more at home in the jungle than in refined society, and, robbing man of his true dignity, reduces him to the level of a beast or demon.

VI

CHARITY AND KINDNESS

“Charity is kind.” I Corinthians, 13, 4.

CHARITY is patient, charity is kind. We are not yet done with St. Paul. Hitherto we have dealt with patience as a feature of charity, now we mean to discuss kindness. Patience embraces the eight negative qualities of charity, no selfishness, no envy, no joy in another’s evil, no sinister thought, no pride, no perverse dealing, no ambition, no anger; and we were already at some pains to elucidate these several crimes against our chosen virtue, to uncover their baseness, and rise to an appreciation of the intense disgust they ought to create in the soul. Kindness embraces the five positive qualities of charity, joy in another’s good, forbearance with all, faith in everybody, hope for everybody, and, that crowning virtue of the new dispensation, endurance of wrong.

Kindness means to do good to another, and nothing seems simpler. But the endless forms kindness can assume make the virtue a most complicated study, and vindicate to it, in the matter of practice, application as wide as life. Other virtues have to wait for opportunities, and sometimes they are idle whole days at a time. They need be practised only when occasion arises, and for long or short intervals remain quiet in

some corner at the back of the head. But kindness is always and everywhere in demand. It touches every nook and corner of the day and night. When not doing kindness, we ought to be thinking it or talking it; and when not doing, thinking or talking, a man is asleep or dead. Unkind dreams are of course quite beyond our control, and we are not responsible for them; and yet I rather think that if our waking hours were what they ought to be in the matter of kindness, our dreams would borrow color from them, and be equally kind.

Every kindness we do the neighbor is a kindness done to God, and the thought must be ever with us to hold us to our duty, and to put God deeper and deeper into our debt. The crust of bread handed a beggar in the name of charity is an alms to God, and no wonder attaches to the statement, after reading Christ's narrative of what is going to happen on the day of General Judgment in case of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, those in prison. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." St. Matthew, 25, 35. Kindness sets a man close to God, it is a divine quality, and wonderfully suggestive of the sun that rises on the good and bad, the rain that falls on the just and unjust. St. Matthew 5, 45. No mystery attaches to kindness, it is within easy reach of the smallest child's mind, and its slightest manifestation impresses young and old alike. The practice of kindness exerts no great strain, nature itself inclines us that way; and its little discomforts, far from stirring pain, provoke

most pleasurable emotions. Unkindness is decidedly unnatural, and like everything unnatural is its own worst punishment. A lie, because unnatural, drives the blood from the heart to the cheek, and finishes with the blush of shame and visible perturbation of the whole liar, body and soul. A wrong done the neighbor hurts its doer more than his victim; and we could spare ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain by uniform kindness to everybody. Here if anywhere the law of compensation is abundantly verified; and every minute of comfort we procure another means an hour of comfort for ourselves, and every hour of pain we cause another means whole days of agony and torment for ourselves. The readiest way to be happy is to promote the happiness of others without thought of our own; and souls altogether intent on curing the sorrows of others have no time or inclination to harbor or feel their own. In this particular the kind in some faint way resemble God. Woe can have no part in God, He is all happiness without any menace of loss or diminution; and so with absolutely no need of concern for His own personal welfare, He is all solicitude for the welfare of His creatures. Kindness, then, besides being a requisite for salvation, is a supreme need for happiness here and a short-cut to peace of soul and comfort of body.

Nobody but knows the measure of kindness, charity exacts from us when the neighbor is its object. Christ fixed the amount centuries ago in no uncertain terms, and ever since His rule is the standard with Christians. We must love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and

this simple law of Christ is come down the ages of history with the dignified title of the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," is but a particular application of the more general obligation imposed on mankind by the Lawmaker to the world. And kindness would be universal, if men only shaped their lives according to this motto. Boys and girls forget it when they annoy their teachers in class. Superiors forget it when they unduly harass their subjects. Doctors forget it when they let their patients die. Lawyers forget it when they neglect a client's interests; and in community every unkindness is a departure from this rule. In our intercourse with the neighbor we must stand ourselves in his place, and determine what treatment at his hands would meet with our favor. The treatment we select for ourselves must be the treatment we accord him, unless we want to forfeit all right to friendship with Christ. We cannot be friends of Christ, and disregard His wishes in this important matter. In all honesty we cannot expect a neighbor to be a friend, unless we do him this kindness. A friend is a second self, and it is stupid folly to treat one as a stranger and regard him a second self. Nobody is a stranger to himself, self and stranger are mutually destructive terms, and friendship with Christ is incompatible with unkindness to the neighbor. Kindness therefore is a winner, and unkindness is as swift to alienate friends as kindness is to conciliate them. Nothing perhaps is more offensive than unkindness. It is to the soul what bitterness and foulness are to the senses, and the mind of man is keener

to unpleasant experiences than the body. Old King Lear in the pelting storm exults to think that the wind and the rain are kinder than the sharp tooth of a daughter's ingratitude. Kindness is the mark of a lady. Newman somewhere defines her as the woman who knowingly and wittingly gives offense to nobody, and society people would be saints if they only gave God half the notice they give their company. They wear fine clothes, to spare admiring eyes offense: they are at infinite pains to put guests at their ease; and whatever reputations they murder in secret, in the open they are all adulation, praise and flattery. The dove of peace flits from shoulder to shoulder in the drawing-room, at society's crowded gatherings deadly enemies live on terms of most intimate familiarity, and all the knifing is done when its victims are miles away from the scene of carnage. We religious could learn lessons from men and women of the world in the difficult art of meeting the foe with a smile, and suppressing resentment when occasion demands the sacrifice. Of course the whole thing is mere sham in society; but, after all, concealed animosity is better than open offense; and, if in religion we could do ourselves the violence men and women do themselves in society, common-sense and the grace of God could enable us to change the sham to reality, and really and truly love even our enemies.

Saints are never at a loss for opportunities to practise kindness. They are always on the alert for occasions, and seize whatever chance offers. I invite your attention to these few in particular, the smile of

welcome that keeps a hunted brother from fleeing to the desert of despair to die, mutual help, the word in season, the cheap charity manifest in smaller deeds of kindness. In community we must be ever mindful of mutual help. In all our behavior we must be on our guard against anything like offense or impatience. We must, no matter how perversely dealt with, obstinately refuse to count ourselves wronged. Seeming unkindness can in most cases be interpreted aright by ascribing it to lack of malice. Where no offense is intended, no offense can be taken; and we can always flatter ourselves that nobody means us harm. We must exert ourselves to render happy and contented the men and women obliged by vocation to pass their lives in our company, and all the while labor with sober industry at our own holiness. If in the language of Scripture silence is like an apple of gold on a bed of silver, to what shall we compare a kind word in time of need? It is like a breath of spring come from play in a forest of blossoms, to refresh all the tired senses of a weary traveler, seated in the shade for a rest. And on no few occasions a brother's or a sister's sorrow claims the tribute at our hands. Sorrow shuns publicity, and it grows amazingly when introspective silence is encouraged. Unless shared with others and dispelled by outside comfort, it degenerates to fits of brooding, and works harm that a word in season could have kept at a distance. In a community they are centres of benediction, who hold the gentle art of flooding other lives with sunshine. They refuse themselves to entertain trouble; and, consecrated to the

unselfish task of promoting good cheer, they bar sadness from entrance to convent or cloister. Sadness has killed more mortals than the sword, and these comforters are life-savers. Forgetting their own light or heavy woes, they manifest interest in others, and with a timely question, a seasonable remark, a welcome smile, lure them from the wilderness of dull care to the open country of God's love and virtuous activity. Be good listeners. Hear the neighbor out with patience, and help him carry his burden. Talk is a species of medicine to sorrow, and trouble takes wing with its telling.

Certainly we want all the world to think well of us, to speak well of us, and to do us every kindness in its power. We have a lot of respect for the world's judgment, and it conduces mightily to our comfort to know that we stand right in everybody's esteem. If we want to shape our lives according to the wisdom of the Golden Rule, we must accord the same favor to our neighbor. We must think well of him, no matter what reprehensible features in his conduct counsel a contrary attitude. We must harbor no suspicion. We must entertain no rash judgment, we must give him the benefit of every doubt, we must transform his vices into virtues; and, where facts clamor for his condemnation, we must issue pardon on the strength of his intention. We talk as we think, our hands are not far from our heads; and kind thoughts are almost sure to provoke kind words and kind deeds. To say nothing of their injustice, suspicions and rash judgments are highly unkind. It is poor logic to derive a sure

conclusion from uncertain premises. We have to condemn inwardly what is clearly blameworthy in another's conduct, but nothing prevents us from keeping our knowledge to ourselves and refraining from publishing it to the world. It is to usurp the prerogative of God to endeavor to read the secrets of men's hearts. "Judge not, that you may not be judged. Condemn not, that you may not be condemned." St. Luke, 6, 37. There is only a slight shade of difference between hurting your neighbor in your own esteem and hurting him in the esteem of others. Suspicions and rash judgments are a species of detraction, wherein the detractor is his own audience. Detraction is worse than they, only because it alienates from the neighbor a hundred friends, while they alienate one. Suspicions and rash judgments are slander, detraction and calumny in germ, and seed needs only a little encouragement to grow to maturity.

These evils have their root in pride and self-conceit, in native crookedness of character, in envy, jealousy and hatred. Humility leaves saints without a minute to study the faults of others; it urges them to seek in others things to imitate, not things to avoid: and it is bedtime when they have gotten the affairs of their own little kingdom in order. A fool thinks all the world fools, a robber thinks all the world thieves; and we never ascribe a fault to others on weak grounds without inviting the wise to reproach us with the same fault. Persistent esteem of others has kind words and kind deeds for sure results. Personally it is a comfort to know that others speak well of us, and all

the world is alike in this respect. Everybody welcomes and loves the generosity manifest in unmeasured praise, everybody dreads and hates the littleness and meanness of adverse criticism. The man blessed with large reverence for his neighbor's reputation is everywhere welcome and enjoys everybody's friendship. Talk of your neighbor's good qualities; never mention his defects. The bee and the snake feed on the same flower. The bee loads his little body with honey, the snake stuffs his slimy length with poison. Be honey-makers, not purveyors of poison. One task is just as easy as the other, and honey-making is far more pleasant. The gift of speech was made us not to harass and annoy others, but to promote the reign of happiness and good cheer in the world. Recall the good thief on the cross, and the comfort his words of praise administered to the dying Christ. How like music his words must have sounded on the ears of Jesus! No music so sweet as encouragement and commiseration when the world is against us, when mankind wears a universal frown. The man's heart was a very furnace of love. Love prompted him to stand up on his cross and declare himself Christ's friend in the midst of Christ's enemies. Holy writers tell us that the Jews, maddened by his advocacy of Christ's cause, hastened his death with new wounds and new torture. Their malice only added to his other triumphs the crowning glory of first martyr in the New Law.

A spirit of universal forgiveness can perhaps best enable us to keep clear of suspicious and rash judg-

ments against the neighbor. Regularly we suspect others and judge them because we bear them a grudge. We are more lenient with our friends. And Christ on the cross can be our model in this matter of forgiveness. With His cross for pulpit He thought no other virtue worthier of first place in His sermon. We are all children of the one Father, and our elder brother Christ wants us to be separated from the rest of mankind by this line of mutual forgiveness. To rob us of all excuse for hatred based on wrongs done us, He in His dying hour forgave, asked God in Heaven to forgive, men whose hands were red with His adorable blood. Can we in the face of such an example allow trifling hurts to rankle in our bosom? Can we allow a look, a word, a blow to drive us to fury, goad us to revenge? No, no; let us rather with the dying Christ pray for these enemies. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Let us be more concerned at the grievous injury they do themselves in God's sight than at the small harm they do us. They know not what they do. They are not aware of the pains we take to serve God, they know nothing of the love we bear them away down in our hearts. They know not now; but some day they shall know, and this knowledge shall be their sorrow's crown of sorrows.

VII

CHARITY AND KINDNESS

"Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Galatians, 6, 10.

IN this business of kindness our brothers and sisters in religion deserve our first attention. They are the household of the faith, and charity begins at home. The father who is kind to everybody but the members of his own family is peculiarly unnatural, and the religious who forgets brothers and sisters in his distribution of favors is no better. An unkind father, an unkind mother can take all the joy out of a child's life; and when our own neglect us, the whole world's notice is little worth. We must exert ourselves to make things pleasant for the men and women obliged by very vocation to spend their lives in our company. Kindness is the external manifestation of charity; and the charity that never betrays itself is cold comfort to the neighbor. To be kind is to do good to another; and St. Paul enumerates five different favors we can do others. They are, joy in another's good, faith in what he says, hope for the best when he is most disappointing, patience with all his conduct, and the endurance of wrong. Genuine charity is a blending of individualism and altruism, with God for binding principle. With God out of the question, individual-

ism becomes selfishness, altruism becomes creature-worship; and it is hard to tell which of the two abuses is the worse. Joy in our own good is individualism, nobody is without the quality, and saints save it from the shame of selfishness by referring the emotion to God's glory. Joy in another's good is altruism, and the emotion is right when it never allows the neighbor's profit to crowd out memory of God's glory. Therefore, we must rejoice in another's good simply because his prosperity is another manifestation of God's abundant goodness, and because the favor can better enable him to help along God's cause in the world and make more rapid progress towards holiness. Every manifestation of God's goodness falling under our observation is a new argument to prove His surpassing beauty, and the more beauty God assumes in our thoughts, the more irresistibly He attracts our wills and our hearts. Therefore, every addition to our neighbor's wealth, whether it be one more virtue, one more degree of knowledge, one more charm of manner, one more bodily perfection, one more triumph, ought to fill us with genuine gladness, because every addition to his wealth reveals a new element of attractiveness in God; and we cannot grow in knowledge of God's beauty without growing in love for God.

It ought to be the easiest thing in the world to rejoice in another's good, and yet saints alone would seem to have compassed the art. Certainly, nothing is more natural than to rejoice with them that rejoice and to weep with them that weep. The world has crystallized the process in an old saying, and old say-

ings are harder to set aside than the principles of different schools in philosophy. "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone," is a half truth and a half falsehood. And the half that is false only emphasizes the half that is true. Men of ordinary virtue are even more prone to pity misfortune than to applaud prosperity; and any other phase of mind is nothing short of unnatural. To withhold applause is just as much to oppose nature as to withhold pity; and when we forget our duty in this matter, we give the lie to the old saying, and make it read, "Weep, and the world weeps with you; laugh, and you laugh alone." The whole truth is or ought to be, "Laugh or weep, and the world laughs or weeps with you." When an orator wants to make his audience laugh, he smiles; when he wants his audience to weep, he is himself all sadness. What I want to drive home is the fact that any refusal on our part to rejoice in another's good is quite against the beneficent instincts of nature, and that every display of the kindness betokens a nature in harmony with grace. Another legitimate reason to rejoice in another's good is the circumstance that every new accession to his worth is a new asset for effective work in the kingdom of God. And as workers in the kingdom, we ought to hail with loud acclaim every addition to the strength of our co-laborers in Christ. The more they carry, the lighter our own burden; and it is not common-sense to look for trouble, or feel easy when we are overburdened.

Besides, whatever joy we manifest in a neighbor's good impresses him as welcome praise; and nothing

perhaps is more an incentive to new endeavor than praise for past performances. We need the help ourselves, we are not dead to the exhilarating influence of encouragement; and we make no mistake, when we reckon the neighbor a slave to the same need, and open to the same inducement. We are not gods, we are not self-sufficient; and we need friends, we need kindness, we need kindred hearts able and willing to share our joys and share our sorrows. Man's happiness is little worth, unless it affects others; and sorrow is overwhelming, when it smites a victim devoid of every outside help. We ought to be glad that others are better than we, because the reflection can keep us humble, and humility is well worth while. We are all one family, a brother's glory or a sister's never detracts from a brother or a sister, and it is considered no just cause for grief in the household. St. John the Baptist must be our model, and the words he uttered on that memorable occasion of his meeting with Christ, must be always on our lips. "He must increase, I must decrease." The Baptist was whole worlds different from the Pharisees. They hated Christ with an abiding hate, and every day witnessed a new growth in their hate. Every little token of affection for Christ displayed by the multitude maddened them; and they finished with the crime of Deicide or God-murder. The Baptist was all joy at the Messiah's appearance, made hasty preparations to relinquish his mission of preacher and prophet, and was responsible for the first four recruits to enter Christ's college of apostles. Judas made the awful mistake of condemning

Magdalen's splendid display of affection for the Saviour in Simon's house, and he sold the Master for thirty pieces of silver, to finish with the awful crime of despairing suicide. The elder son in the story of the prodigal gained nothing in our esteem by his refusal to welcome the wayward brother with some of the spirit of his father.

Charity, according to St. Paul, urges us to believe all, or believe in everybody, unless prudence counsels the opposite course. A readiness to believe all may expose us to the danger of being often deceived; but that is a very small matter, when compared with the amount of good the trick played upon us procures. Peace is propagated, wordy quarrels are discouraged, suspicions are killed, and much bitterness of spirit and of tongue is hindered from effect. A readiness on our part to believe others awakens in them a readiness to believe us; and sincerity, that prime requisite for happiness in community, is the immediate result. Frankness and candor ought to be more conspicuous than they are in our intercourse with one another. To be sincere in every single detail of conduct calls for a measure of moral courage absolutely wanting in most mortals. It is quite unlikely that this world of deceivers will ever meet in congress and pledge itself unreservedly and unconditionally to the flawless worship of sincerity. Hypocrisy is an instinct with men and women, and it would be asking too much of human nature to wish them to lay the unlovely habit aside, and quite forget the garnered knowledge of years. The evil done in every nook and corner of life by want of

sincerity is simply incalculable, and we can only guess at its proportions by sorrowfully imagining what a paradise we should inhabit, if sincerity reigned supreme in our own hearts and in the hearts of others. Take, for instance, the one department of human intercourse labelled friendship. Even with all the killing bitterness friendships borrow from insincerity, they still continue magnificent blessings, and minister to men's greedy hearts a large measure of sweetness. Think of what honey they would distil, if this stinging curse were altogether absent. Uncertainty poisons friendships, and the prevalence of insincerity in every walk of life makes uncertainty inevitable. We are ourselves insincere in our dealings with our fellows, and we never take a friend to our bosom without a lurking suspicion that he is no less an offender than ourselves, and quite as proficient in the art of deceiving.

We must hope in all, despair of nobody; and we must by our conduct and conversation give others assurance that this is our attitude towards them. The attitude is counselled by common sense as well as by charity. In God's providence there are no desperate cases, save only the impenitent, and our neighbors in religion are out of that class. While there is life, there is hope; and when there is question of spiritual life, a small measure of good will can change hope to certainty. An infallible cure is always ready to hand in the shape of confession, and the box is the corner drug-store. God's hope in sinners is as unlimited as His patience; and His love for men is single explanation of the fact. A mother's love pursues the child all the

way to the grave, and pauses there only long enough to count his chances for salvation, and begin all over again. And her love for her child is the measure of her hope. If charity were as much in favor with us as it is with God and the mother, we could better appreciate the force of St. Paul's admonition to hope in all and despair of nobody. Hope weakens with love, and we despair of only them we hate. The parable of the seed and the sower is a touching tribute to the lasting qualities of God's hope in sinners.

We need but consult our own lives to form an idea of the colossal courage awakened by the reflection that, in spite of all our disappointing conduct and lamentable mediocrity, kind friends still hope in us and lend us the warm comfort of their confidence. A child knows no fear in his father's company; he would fight a giant, if his father stood at his back and gave the word. When others despair of us, we think it high time to despair of ourselves; and when others see good in us, we like to harbor the suspicion that they see better than ourselves.

To bear all would seem to mean a readiness to submit with patience to the small discomfort contact with opposite characters provokes. We can help ourselves in this matter by the reflection that our neighbors are painfully aware of their own imperfections, and that they derive quite as much sorrow from our faults as we borrow from theirs. Life in community makes constant call on mutual forbearance, and work is distributed, and so made lighter, when we carry one another's burdens.

To endure all means to submit in patience to downright wrongs, and demands even a larger measure of generosity and sturdiness. With St. Peter we must forgive seventy times seven times. No cross, no crown. If we had nothing to suffer at the hands of our brothers and sisters, we should have to leave home in search of crosses.

VIII

CHARITY'S FRUITS

"By their fruits you shall know them." St. Matthew, 7, 16.

IN a sense we are all Pragmatists. We are all eminently practical people, and theories are little worth unless they are substantiated by facts. In this matter of virtue the important thing is to know whether we are in possession of the quality or not. Knowledge of a virtue's nature is important only inasmuch as it helps us to a practical realization of its actual possession. We have been a long time on charity, and, while not altogether neglecting the practical side of the question, we have perhaps failed to gather in short compass unmistakable signs of charity's presence in the soul. Charity is love of God and man carried to a sublime extravagance. Charity is holiness, charity is grace. The Holy Ghost is the author of grace, and charity is first manifestation of the Holy Ghost's residence in the soul of a saint. By their fruits you shall know them, is Scripture's commendation of a wise and virtuous Pragmatism. Therefore, to know whether we are moved by the spirit of God, we must know whether we acquit ourselves of the deeds of the Spirit. To know whether the grace of God is spread all over our hearts, we must know whether our hearts are docile to the promptings of the Spirit. We are trees, and like trees

we are known by our fruits. The Holy Ghost is our vivifying principle, if we bear the fruits of the Holy Ghost; and, with St. Paul for instructor, these fruits of the Holy Ghost are no hidden mystery. In his Epistle to the Galatians, chapter five, he enumerates twelve, and they can serve for test or measure of how we stand with God. They can acquaint us with the small or large progress we are making in charity, in holiness, in grace.

According to St. Paul these are the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity. Charity holds first place, because it is mother to all the virtues; and just as charity is first and chiefest manifestation or fruit of the Holy Ghost in the soul, so everything else in the list is a manifestation or fruit of charity. It may be well to remark that Greek texts enumerate only nine fruits, because patience, modesty, and chastity differ too little from longanimity, mildness and continence to get separate notice. The Holy Ghost is parent to charity, charity is mother to all the rest. Therefore, to know whether charity is ours, we need only know whether joy, peace, patience and the other qualities just enumerated are among our possessions. And nothing is easier to answer. When we once discover that we slave to opposite emotions or tendencies, nothing is easier to correct. We know our own hearts, we know the difference between joy and sadness, between peace and trouble, and so of the rest; and with this double knowledge we must take measures to cultivate within

ourselves joy, peace and the other fruits of the Holy Ghost, and pull up as weeds sadness, trouble, and the other fruits of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Joy is rest in the possession of good, and the quiet of a good conscience is its crown and consummation. A quiet mind is an everlasting feast. Pain is pleasure's recompense, self-denial is pleasure without pain, and real pleasure comes of resistance to pleasure. No victory won by a mortal is equal to the victory a saint wins over his passions. Joy is not pleasure. One is rest, the other is the bloom or efflorescence of activity, quite impossible without restlessness and discontent. Greed of pleasure is a fire, always leaping, climbing, reaching out for new fuel, hungriest in the midst of plenty, and quiet only when its slave is dead.

We can have joy in God, joy in self, and joy in the neighbor, viewing all three as present goods; and only a clean conscience can enable us to view God, self and the neighbor as present goods. When conscious of sin, God prompts remorse, waves the way towards His prison house of eternal torment, and assumes the repellent guise of an avenger. When out of tune with our destiny, life is full of discordant noises, and joy is a stranger. We loathe ourselves, we are weighed down by a depressing sense of our inferiority, and wonder how God contrives still to be patient with our wretched meanness and ingratitude. And we never yet wronged a neighbor without paying the penalty in the shape of discomfort, disquiet and unease.

Content would seem to be the secret of joy, content with God, content with self, content with the neighbor.

The next best thing to having a million dollars is to be satisfied and content with one. Disappointment becomes an impossibility when we are resigned to God's will and submissive to the decrees of His providence. A peasant satisfied with his lot in life and its environment is happy as any king. All company is congenial, when we once wake up to the surpassing beauty differences of character and disposition lend social intercourse. If we are without joy, we are without charity, we are without the grace of God; the blame lies with ourselves, and remedy is within easy reach. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Romans, 14, 17.

And our joy must be full. In one sense joy is full in Heaven alone, in another sense joy can be made full on earth. Joy is really and truly full, only when the heart is full, nothing this side of God can quite fill the heart and its large capacity, and Heaven means the secure possession of God in the beatific vision. Joy is really and truly full only when desire is at rest, and the elect alone enjoy that privilege, because they are happy to their fullest capacity. Some saints sit higher, others sit lower in the kingdom; but differences of degree in glory leave lower saints as full of joy as higher. Lower and higher alike are full to their utmost capacity; and in reason nobody in Heaven can desire any new addition to his happiness. Fuller than full is a contradiction in terms, and the elect are vessels of water of varying sizes. A pitcher, whether small or large, can desire no more water when once it is filled; and successive additions to its contents would be pure

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waste, and no favor to the pitcher. Here on earth desire is never at rest in our bosom, and fullness of joy in true and real sense is quite beyond our reach. Perfectibility is a law of our very nature, and any attempt to kill desire is an attempt to kill the man. And yet a fullness of joy resembling that current in Heaven is quite possible on earth. We cannot be without desires, but we can regulate them. We can trim them to number and dimensions suited to our limited capacity; and much of life's happiness depends on keeping desire in tight control. Want only what you can get without harm to the law of God, and without prejudice to your soul's salvation. All life's troubles are traceable to neglect of this rule.

*We grasp at shadows, substance miss,
Want what we cannot get;
And what we thought supremest bliss
Wears often to regret.
Each heart is pleasure's hiding place,
If hearts but stayed at home.
Disaster stares us in the face,
When othewhere we roam.*

With our vows for burden, the wealth of a millionaire, the pleasures of the flesh, worldly honor are quite beyond us; and if we want to be philosophers we must banish them from our thoughts, and waste no time desiring them. The religious who longs for wealth or the luxuries wealth can purchase, who dallies with

wrong thoughts or does wrong deeds, who seeks the esteem of men and worldly glory, is about as sensible as the beggar who dreams when awake of bags of gold, as the dull clod who expects to be called to the presidency in the morning, as the lunatic who wears a crown and thinks himself a king.

Peace is another fruit of the Holy Ghost that bears unmistakable witness to charity's presence in the soul. *Pax vobis* and *Dominus vobiscum* are greetings of about the same value, and only another tribute to the identity in force between peace and God, or charity, or holiness. After His resurrection from the dead, Christ invariably introduces Himself to the company of the disciples with the salutation, *Pax vobis*. Where the priest at Mass says *Dominus vobiscum*, the bishop says, *Pax vobis*; because the bishop as possessed of the fullness of the priesthood comes closer to Christ than the rank and file of the clergy.

Restricting the question to the individual, peace means a quiet mind, immune from the mad tumult of passion, tempted without being disturbed, annoyed without being harassed, fighting the good fight of salvation without oppressive solicitude regarding the outcome. Grace and God's friendship kill all dread of sin and hell; and ensuing peace is responsible for a season of tranquillity that surpasses understanding. This tranquillity makes itself felt in every nook and corner of the saint's being; and, reaching beyond the limits of his own little kingdom, puts and keeps him on good terms with God and the rest of the world. War

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is the status between enemies; and the saint is God's aide and ally, his own best friend, and no thing of offense to his neighbor.

This peace viewed as the reward or fruit of holiness is so alluring a recompense that merely natural philosophers, men with small or no respect for revelation, count it incentive enough for the universal reign of virtue on earth, and profess to see no real need of a Heaven or a hell for sanction and penalty of the natural law. In Ethics their theory is known as the autonomy of reason, and even apart from the plain teaching of Scripture, common-sense proclaims aloud that full and complete sanction of the natural law is reserved for a future life, that no penalty short of an eternal hell is commensurate with sin's malice, and that, while approval of conscience is no adequate reward for virtue, remorse of conscience is no efficacious and universal deterrent of crime, without God for executioner and the place of eternal torments for prison. Two motives are better than one, and without harm to the supernatural incentive of happiness in Heaven, we can cultivate virtue with a view to compassing the peace it propagates in the soul.

Peace, taken as a fruit of the Holy Ghost, is agreement between wills, when the wills in question are orderly and tend towards real and true good. Though it has play in a man's relations with God and the neighbor, the emotion is generally restricted to the individual's own private affairs. Regularly peace results in a single desire common to two wills, that phase of friendship wherein the two parties to the contract

cherish and foster the same wishes. A man is therefore at peace with God when he wishes what God wishes, and despises what God despises. A man is at peace with his neighbor, when there is no clashing of wills, when he treats his neighbor just as his neighbor wishes to be treated. Little differences of opinion between friends are far from destroying or even diminishing peace, because peace has to do with the will and turns on desire; it is not an affair of the intellect or of knowledge like opinions. Two tight friends can think in a widely different way on any question without breaking friendship or falling away from peace.

A man is at peace with himself when the two appetites within him, the sensitive and the intellectual, the inferior and the superior, work in consummate harmony, and coalesce into one desire stamped with the seal of reason's approval. All are aware that we have a sensitive appetite, as material and organic as sight or hearing. It finds expression in what we call the passions, it is always attended by body-changes, and has for object such material goods as food, physical pleasure and the like. The name appetite serves to keep it apart from will or rational appetite, as spiritual and inorganic as the soul itself or the intellect. The will's activity finds expression in what we call a desire or wish, it is attended by no body-change and has for object such spiritual and abstract goods as virtue, honor, wisdom and the like. Till charity pervades the soul, these two appetites are at war, one seeking to dominate the other, and the phenomenon is familiarly known as temptation. Scripture pointedly refers to

the quarrel in the expression, the flesh lusteth against the spirit. St. Paul's sting of the flesh, the angel of Satan, is another reference to the same fact. With the advent of charity into the soul, this war between the flesh and the spirit is at an end, and peace results; or, if it perseveres, the victory is always on the side of the spirit, and every victory is a new treaty of peace. To yield to serious temptation is to sin, mortal sin is incompatible with charity, and the soul swayed by charity never yields to serious temptation.

Joy and peace are only two of the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, and they are perhaps of all twelve the most trustworthy and most universal signs of charity's residence in the soul. The others, while equally reliable, are narrower in their application, and touch only certain phases of a man's conduct.

Patience and longanimity ought to be in evidence when contact with testy, proud and boorish characters stirs discomfort and goads us to fury.

Benignity and modesty add a new charm to every act of kindness we perform. A favor done with bad grace is little better than an injury, and benignity saves our favors from the reproach. One can be kind and at the same time rough, and the charity of God is not in Him. Saints are the politest people in the world, and this is so true that ordinary mortals measure a man's holiness by his fidelity to the rules of etiquette and to the lesser amenities of social intercourse.

Modesty means due measure, and exercises a salutary restraint on all a man's outward acts, his glances, his

gait and carriage, his dress, his talk, his laughter. Modesty makes the lady, canonizes man or woman in the eyes of the world, and no other requisite is needed for entrance into society.

Continence like modesty means restraint, and in common with chastity would seem to be restricted to interior emotions with a bearing on sexual pleasure. In a wider sense it belongs to such only as keep in tight control their appetite for food and drink as well as for forbidden delights, and allow no unruly passion like anger, or sadness, or pride, or ambition to usurp supremacy in the soul, and reduce them to abject slavery.

Chastity has to do in particular with disorders of the flesh, and would seem to differ from continence in this, that, while continence is all struggle, chastity is all peace. Some are such by very nature, or by early education, that enticements of the flesh are no allurements, and fail in their eyes of all appealing force. Chastity is the gift of such souls, and they have abundant reason to thank God for the favor. Others are quick to the promptings of forbidden pleasure, and life is one long struggle between duty and treason, between self-denial and self-indulgence. Luckily for them grace supplements the weakness of nature, and they emerge from the struggle always victorious. Continence is their virtue; and, though wrong thoughts assail them, though passion bows them to the ground, they repel the thoughts, they fight passion to a finish, and keep their hearts and their bodies clean till they die.

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Continence always finishes in chastity, and security is out of the question till the transformation is accomplished.

Kindness or goodness is perhaps the commonest manifestation of charity, and what appeals most to the multitude. Humanitarianism, the curse of modern religion, is only an exaggeration of the quality's value, and sins by excess in its veneration for kindness. Christ went about doing good; and St. Peter in his speech to the people fastens on this feature of Christ's life for argument to prove that his Master, Jesus of Nazareth, was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and that God was with Him. Acts, 10, 38.

The Latin word for mildness, *mansuetudo*, gives us a fair insight into its nature. It means smooth to the touch, easy to be patted, coaxed without difficulty, docile to the rein, and saves its owner from the outbursts of anger and animosity afflicting such as wish to put up with nobody and nothing, such as kick against all control, resent every slight wrong, and avenge words with blows and lashes.

Faith in this passage of St. Paul hardly means the theological virtue prompting us to accept statements on the authority of God's word. Faith in this sense is the root of charity, not one of its fruits. St. Anselm suggests fidelity to promises for meaning, and makes St. Paul say that a man of charity is a man of his word. Others see in the word faith a reference to that quality of charity already discussed in our study of First Corinthians, chapter 13, where St. Paul says that charity believes all. In this third sense, faith

means faith in the neighbor, simple and virtuous credulity, readiness to believe every statement he makes, refusal to entertain suspicions regarding his truthfulness; and we were already at some pains to show what harm any opposite course of conduct works to charity.

These, then, are the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity. Like trees, we are known by our fruits, and whatever soul knows herself to be a conspicuous failure in any of these twelve particulars, has reason to suspect the quality of her holiness, and must take no rest till the defect is remedied, till all twelve fruits shine in her life like the diadem of twelve stars encircling the head of our Queen of the Immaculate Conception.

IX

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people." Judith, 15, 10.

MARY IMMACULATE is peculiarly the patron of religious, their inspiration, their stay and support in the struggle. She is the great sign in our heaven described by St. John in the twelfth chapter of his Apocalypse, a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. Poverty is chief requisite for that close union the beatific vision implies. In the words of Christ, to see God we must be poor in spirit. Poverty, therefore, while stripping its owner of everything else, clothes him with the sun of God's nearer presence, and enables him to see where slaves to greed fall blind. The emptier we are of what the world calls happiness, the poorer we are in friends, the readier we are for God's choicest blessings, the more appealing objects we are to God's large pity. Recall the shepherds on Jewry's hill that first Christmas night. God swept the world for souls worthy to welcome His only begotten to earth; and, passing Rome with its Cæsar and barbaric splendor, passing Jerusalem with its temple of gold and its men learned in the law and prophets, He paused at Bethlehem to make its cheerless stable His headquarters,

to summon three shepherds of the hills to His coronation. The poverty of Bethlehem and its inhabitants held God's notice, fixed Christ's birthplace, and has ever since proved the open doorway to God's nearer friendship, the first of religion's three holy vows. The poverty of these shepherds served for credentials, it secured them entrance into the society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and it was thorough. Dumb sheep were their single company, the wind-swept hill was their single home, and the broad and bleak canopy of the heavens was the only roof they could call their own. Chastity lifts virgins high above the sordid and degrading cares of marriage, sets them near the angels, where they trample under foot what grosser pleasures find fittest portraiture in the fickle and inconstant moon. Obedience vests us with the liberty of the children of God, makes us kings among men, and crowns our lives with innumerable good works symbolized in Mary's diadem of twelve stars.

The Immaculate Conception on the part of God, the Father, is a striking instance of the jealous care with which He guards His dignity, His self-respect, the one feature of His being He kept safe from harm in the process of man's redemption. Personal holiness was the side of His character He jealously defended. Here is the problem that confronted divine wisdom at the very dawn of time, when sin seemed to have forever upset the whole plan of creation. How save and make white again a world stained to its innermost with the stain of sin, a stain that only the tears and blood of God Himself could wash away? In the hypothesis

of condign satisfaction, redemption through the tears and blood of a God made man, born of a woman, was the only remedy, and redemption knew difficulties. Had the Son of the Father been born of a woman, touched with the guilt of even original sin, of a woman once under allegiance to Satan, the Father's dignity as God would have suffered. On the other hand, our primal fall and the word God passed that day with Himself obliged eternal justice to see to it that no daughter of the race escaped the penalty of tainted origin. The combined prayer of Heaven's angels could not in this matter turn aside God's enkindled wrath. The tearful supplications of a condemned people, the pent up fire of a seraph's pleadings, supported by all the Amens of Heaven, could not shake God from His purpose. But God's dignity was at stake!. A Mother had to be chosen for the Son of the Father, and the Father had to relent. One glorious exception had to be made to an otherwise universal rule. This single departure from the formulary of our condemnation, Mary's Immaculate Conception, suggests motives without number. It aimed a death-blow at hell's first victory, it shook to its base the throne of hell's rebel king. It flung out to an almost despairing world the banner of hope, and proclaimed to the nations that hell is unable to do man harm, when man entrenches himself behind God's promises and God's eternal vigor. But how small such motives seem, when compared with what we call God's dignity, His self-respect! God's dignity is God's life! Could He by an impossible supposition lose one jot or tittle of His self-respect,

He would in that hour cease to be. And in the whole plan of redemption contact with sin, with original sin, was the one feature that God accounted a menace to His dignity. Poverty was compatible with the divinity, and contempt, and pain, and death. But sin? No! Not if the heavens had to fall! The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary removed that menace. The removal of that menace cost trouble. To save His self-respect God worked a miracle! This solicitude of God for the proprieties makes inevitable a contrast between His conduct and ours. We too, His living images, the images of a King, with royalty stamped in every outline of our features, we too have a dignity, a self-respect to sustain. Honor with us is not the noise made by a demagogue, man's worth and merit are not measured by the standard accepted among thieves and felons. In our catechism intimacy with virtue is the only honor worth striving for; immunity from contact with sin, the highest prerogative we ambition. We are God's messengers, God's ambassadors, and holiness of life is our badge of office, our credentials. Let us then be holy. We honestly want to save souls, to work in the Kingdom. We must teach, we must preach; and it is as damaging as it is humiliating to have to denounce our own conduct from the pulpit or the chair. And let this be the first lesson we learn from the morrow's feast. Personal holiness is the only jewel we can call our own, the one species of wealth we paupers of the Lord can covet. My good name may through no fault of my own be irreparably blasted. The road to fame may be cut from under my

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fect. Heaven may deny me the requisite amount of tact and talent to fly whither my ambitious spirit fain would soar. But no power in Heaven, on earth, or in hell can prevent me from becoming a saint.

We are doing theology no violence when we conceive the Son of God, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, voluntarily offering Himself for the sacrifice of Redemption. His consent was free, His knowledge of Redemption's cost was full, and His acceptance of the trust was a miracle of generosity, a miracle of obedience to His Heavenly Father's wishes. He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to the death on the cross. We can, therefore, consider the Immaculate Conception a favor done the Blessed Virgin in view of her Son's heroism. It is, in fact, an article of faith that this privilege of immunity from sin was conferred on her by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ. She was as truly redeemed by Jesus Christ as any son or daughter of Adam, and nothing prevents us from regarding this stupendous favor a recompense for Christ's stupendous courage and generosity. We can believe that the Son's willingness to suffer and die for mankind so worked on the Father's sense of justice that He reckoned no smaller gift a fitting reward, and needed no other motive to exempt Mary from an otherwise universal law. The thought will serve to recall the debt of gratitude we owe the world's Redeemer, and will help us to appreciate the esteem in which God holds generous self-sacrifice. When we reflect that the degradation and pain Christ suffered for our sakes appealed so forcibly to the

Father's admiration and sense of thankfulness, we can well feel ashamed of our forgetfulness and ingratitude. We need not stop long to measure the length, breadth and depth of that degradation and pain. The Passion is familiar history, and a hurried glance will furnish us with abundant material. We can see Him on His face in the garden. We can recall some of the incidents that had place before Annas, Caiphas and Pilate. We can hear the scourges fall on His defenseless body or see Him mocked as a King by the soldiers of imperial Rome. And we can pause awhile to ask Him to make our hearts His footstool forever, to sit there forever with His crown of thorns on, with that rag of scarlet and that reed to reproach us for our sins, to pity our utter wretchedness, and to warn us away as with a rod from dangers that have a hellish attraction for us, that must kill us yet, unless His grace comes between us and harm. Or we can climb Calvary, stand close to our Queen of Sorrows, watch God dying, and see or feel His giant soul going out in the darkness to His Father. O the generosity, O the magnanimity wrapped up in that act of acceptance, by which the Son of God sealed with His Father the bargain of Redemption! All the world were too inadequate a reward! Something new had to be introduced into creation to save divine justice from the shame of defeat; and that new being was our Mother Mary, immaculate in her conception! Could we but acquit ourselves of heroism in God's service resembling in the faintest way this glorious achievement of the Son of God, we too should deserve, at the Father's hands some marked intervention of His

omnipotence. But we cannot! We are not sturdy enough to forego self in the commonest affairs of life. We shrink from suffering, we shrink from pain with an instinctive dread, and we break down the barrier of God's law to escape trifling hurts. But let us take courage from this mystery of the Immaculate Conception, considered as God's tribute to generosity. Let us derive from it the strength needed to meet like men the sacrifices our post in life demands. Let us not run away from humiliation, or sorrow, or fatigue; and perhaps God, pleased with these small beginnings, will pour out upon us some of the graces He lavished on His saints. God is as jealous of His reputation for generosity as He is of His dignity. He will allow no man to outdo Him on this score; and we never yet denied ourselves a gratification for His love without receiving in return a magnificent reward. One sacrifice has often made a saint; and if God is now whispering to any heart of a holocaust He wants made, that heart had better arrange for a surrender. This, then, is the second lesson we derive from our Mother's Immaculate Conception, the hard lesson of self-denial, the difficult task of generosity in God's service, the martyrdom of obedience. The small gifts we have to offer cannot weigh enough with God to urge a like miracle in our behalf; but they can and they must influence Him to see to it that, even if we came into the world covered all over with sin, and lived only to add to our shame, we may at least go out to meet Him with clean hearts, and clean hands; and that is reward enough, that is reward enough!

*"Naked on parent's knee, a new-born child,
Weeping thou sat'st when all around thee smiled;
So live, that sinking to thy last long sleep,
Thou then may'st smile while all around thee weep."*

If thoughts so sublime crowd in upon us when considering the Immaculate Conception in its relations to God the Father and to God the Son, what bounds shall be able to contain our comfort and our joyous exultation when contemplating this miracle in its relations to Mary? She was ushered in through the gates of the East, a being of beauty more than able to satisfy the capricious taste of critical man. The whiteness of her purity was free from streak and shadow. Other babes enter the world their souls assoiled with the taint of original sin. No actual lapse renders their advent inauspicious; but the eye of no far-seeing prophet is needed to look ahead and catch glimpses of a hideous future, of shattered resolves, of confederacy with the devil, of estrangement from God. Each newly born soul is suggestive of such grim forebodings. Each newly born soul with all its sunshine has patches of power for evil. But the spirit of our ideal without blemish, the spirit of the Blessed Virgin Mary, searched by even the penetrating vision of God, betrayed omens of no unlovely future. Her Immaculate Conception assured her of life-long integrity. Divine Motherhood made Mary's battles God's battles, and consciousness of the sublimity of her calling added new forces to her strength, gave a tinge of godliness to her every thought, word and deed. And yet it is no mistake to say that

this child of predilection, this maiden peculiarly loved of God, could have defeated God's plans, and by abuse of her unrestrained will turned Heaven's smiles into frowns of wrath. Her sanctification, as ours must be, was in part the result of her own individual energy, was a purely personal matter. We rob her Maker of no glory when we ascribe to the Blessed Virgin whatever dignity attaches to noble self-conquest. Nay, more; we can piously believe that this privilege of the Immaculate Conception, though conferred in view of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, was not altogether independent of the Blessed Virgin's dispositions. God's gifts are free. They nevertheless receive most abundantly of them who use them to best advantage. Neglected graces operate to cut short the soul's supply, and God has from eternity predestined the elect to glory, because He from eternity foresaw their fidelity. In somewhat the same way God's foreknowledge of Mary's absolute purity influenced Him to choose her for Mother. Her purity was the sweet smell that attracted His attention, as sung in the first chapter of Canticles, "While the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof." 1, 11. He knew that, even without any such tremendous prerogative as the Immaculate Conception, she still would be "our tainted nature's solitary boast." Presupposing the perfect correspondence with grace, which Mary did actually manifest, God knew that, even if conceived and born in original sin, she still would live an angel in the flesh, and would emerge from temptation immeasurably purer than even the most conspicuous saint in Heaven's

throng of virgins. He knew the victories she would win, even if subjected to Saint Paul's angel of Satan and sting of the flesh, and the splendid record induced God to exempt her from the combat. Apart therefore from all question of the Father's dignity, apart from all question of the Son's generosity, the Immaculate Conception would seem to be, to speak after the manner of men, the only reward commensurate in God's wisdom with Mary's exalted purity. Her Immaculate Conception, like her other prerogatives, was due to no merits of her own, but to the merits of Christ. Mary was as truly redeemed by Christ as the rest of mankind. To compare greater with lesser things, God in a measure behaved as examiners sometimes behave with regard to a bright student. Success at examination entitles the student to entrance into a higher class. The examiners, however, from experience know to a certainty that the examination has no difficulty for this or that student; and, relying on this knowledge, they pass him to the higher class without subjecting him to any examination at all. Absolute sinlessness, escape even from original taint, is of course the crowning glory of the Immaculate Conception; but exemption from concupiscence may be said to be its element of practical importance. God wants us to regard this concupiscence as a field for testing our constancy, as a help to keep us humble. The Blessed Virgin Mary had need of no such test, no such help. God knew already how eternal her constancy would be, how deep her humility. And so He mercifully freed her from that demon of annoyance, from whom He refused to relieve St. Paul.

“There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me.” II Cor., 12, 7. And the mystery contains a lesson. God is so enamoured of purity that He rewards fidelity by removing temptation. Purity is, perhaps, the only virtue thus honored by God. Love of suffering He feeds with new pain; growth in charity is invariably attended with opportunities to overcome unkindness. But the higher we rise in innocence, the closer we get to the angels, the farther we get from the ground; and absolute security against what dust-motes hover in this lower air is the lot of the saints, the crown of years of victory. Let the thought encourage us to put on a new patience. We honestly want to be sons worthy of our Immaculate Mother. Patience, then, for another short while, and all will soon be over. God must some day look our way with eyes of pity. In the meantime, let us never leave the feet of our Mother. Let us over and over again count those twelve stars, and with warmth borrowed from the sun in which she is clothed let us pray—“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, pray for me.”

X

THE EPIPHANY

“In the days of King Herod wise men came from the East to Jerusalem.” St. Matthew, 2, 1.

WHEN Christ was born, all mankind was divided into two parts. God recognized only two nations, the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews were His chosen people, the object of His special love, the guardians of His holy law, the servants of His true worship. The Gentiles were all the other peoples of the earth, Romans, Greeks, and barbarians. These Gentiles were our ancestors. They were no friends to God. They knew little of Him, and that little they misused or neglected, to sink deeper and deeper into vice and corruption. They were utter strangers to the restraint of virtue, and obeyed only one law, the instinct of their natural passions. Their iniquity grew with the years, and the face of the earth was red with their crimes. Christ was born for the Jews on Christmas night. Some shepherds on the hills near Bethlehem were told of the event by angels, and these shepherds spread the news all over Judea. But God was by this time highly offended with the wickedness of His chosen people. They were no better than the Gentiles, and God had often threatened to remove from them His favor, and transfer it to the nations. No Jew took

the trouble to go down from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to welcome the new-born Saviour. He was left alone with His Mother and St. Joseph to shiver in the cold of a cheerless stable and feel the pangs of extreme poverty. And this Infant was their Messiah, the King for whom they had been waiting four thousand years, the great prophet of whom their sacred writings so often and so clearly spoke.

God in Heaven knew that in spite of all the efforts of His love and mercy the Jews were well nigh lost beyond redemption, and determined to give their place in His heart and His affections to the Gentiles. And so He took means to let these Gentiles know of the Messiah's coming. He sent them no angels, such as He sent the Jews. Instead, He caused to appear in the Eastern heavens a star of remarkable brilliancy. This strange visitor excited wonder among the learned, and on consulting their books they found that some such miracle was to precede the birth of God on earth. Three of their kings made preparations to follow the guidance of the star, and discover, if possible, the birthplace of this Child of mystery. They loaded their camels with gifts, bade adieu to their friends and people, and set out on their long journey. The star never failed them. By day and by night it led them across mountains, and deserts, and seas, till finally it disappeared on their entrance into Jerusalem. At a loss how to proceed, they made inquiries in the Holy City, and were told that Bethlehem was the favored spot. Then they started off full of joy for Bethlehem, and as they left Jerusalem the miraculous star again

appeared, to light their way and lead them on till it halted over the entrance to the stable in which the Infant God rested. Full of reverence, they went in, adored the Babe in the manger, offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and after satisfying their devotion returned to their homes in the East. There they became apostles. They preached the faith to their peoples; and God, favoring their work, spread His name and His love over all those parts of the world. Thirty-three years later, the day of the Crucifixion, the Jews were rejected by God. They were deprived of their privileges, and we the Gentiles succeeded to the title of God's people. The Jews to this day are scattered over the earth, abandoned by God, hated and despised by men, a lasting evidence of how terrible God is in His anger, and of how fearful a thing God's curse is. They are a people without a country, without a king, without a place of honor in modern history.

This is the story of the Epiphany, our Christmas; the feast we keep to-day; and it is full of lessons. To be brief, let us merely glance at the persons who figure prominently in the event, Herod, the three kings, and our Mother Mary. Herod was the head of the Jewish nation, and the type of all that was wicked. He was a monster of iniquity, as near a devil as anything outside of hell. As soon as he heard rumors of a new-born King of the Jews, he determined to kill the Child, even though that Child was Israel's Messiah, even though that Child's death were God-murder. To succeed in his design, he reddened his hands with the blood of a thousand and more infants; but the Lord Christ es-

caped his fury. He thought to fool the Magi by an empty lie; but God defeated his plans. The wicked can fool their fellow men to the very eyes; but it is consoling to know that they cannot deceive God. He is infinite wisdom; and, if we keep Him for friend, we are safe. Nothing in Heaven, hell or on earth can harm us. The three kings were men of iron courage and sterling faith. They are our ancestors, and we should to-day feel proud of them. We should prove ourselves their descendants by copying their virtues. Like them we should give God's interests first place in our hearts. In defense of God's glory we should stand up against the world. When strangers among a strange people they stood before Herod and his soldiers, they were absolutely without fear, because they were fighting God's battle and trusted in God's strength. And we Catholics are sometimes called on to make sacrifices, if we want to remain true to God. We are in the midst of unbelievers and scoffers, and to live up to our fathers' faith we need courage like the courage displayed by the three kings. With regard to our Mother Mary, the characteristic most worthy of note is her closeness to her Divine Son. "They found the Child with Mary His Mother." She always kept close to Jesus during life; and we Catholics recognizing this fact can never separate Jesus and Mary in our thoughts. We keep them together. No other people outside of God's true Church pay her this homage. Devotion to Mary is the distinctive badge of Catholicity, and we must let this truth shine in our lives. Honor paid the Mother is honor paid the Son; and

God derives unbounded pleasure from every deed of piety and kindness done in His Blessed Mother's memory. Herod can teach us by his example to dread the danger of losing God's faith and His friendship by sin and wrong-doing. The three kings can teach us by their heroism to value as we value life the grand old name of Catholic, which we received from our fathers, and to spare ourselves no trouble, no pain, to preserve that name till death. The Blessed Virgin can teach us by her silent example how to persevere till the end, dreading no evil on earth so much as separation from our Lord Jesus Christ by the commission of mortal sin.

The three gifts made the Son of God by the three kings must always minister to devout curiosity thoughts as crowded with sweetness as they are with instruction. St. Bernard viewing them in the light of plain common-sense derives their purpose from their obvious uses. He says that the gold was meant to purchase food for the Child Christ; the frankincense, to clear the heavy atmosphere of the stable; and the myrrh, to refresh and strengthen the divine Infant's body. Others see in the gold a tribute to the Kingship of Christ; in the frankincense, a tribute to His divinity; in the myrrh, a reminder of redemption, accomplished by His death on the cross. And the qualities of the three gifts fully bear out the pious fancy. Gold is the king among metals, it is suggestive of regal splendor, and borrows new value from the stamp or seal of the sovereign. And Christ is King, we have no King but Christ, posted at the head of the centuries, seated at the summit of the universe for the acknowledgment of

His people. There is no other name under Heaven given to men whereby we must be saved. Frankincense is thin as air, light as breath, the consecrated symbol of spirits, beings without bodies. In every language spirit or breath is the word universally employed to convey to men's minds ideas or notions of God, angels, the soul. In Greek, $\psi\chi\eta$ is the word for soul, and it means breath; the Latin equivalent anima means the same; and in English spirit means a substance without length, breadth and thickness, quite imponderable and subject to none of the vicissitudes of grosser matter. Besides, rising volumes of incense create in the senses of sight and smell, as they climb heavenwards, impressions wonderfully suggestive of God's nearer presence. The light, and airy, and graceful, and bewildering motions they execute are altogether unearthly and wonderfully provocative of thoughts of God; while the comfort incense ministers to men's nostrils awakens a quiet almost as deep and restful as slumber. For this reason, in the Old Law the whole interior of Solomon's temple on the day of its dedication was a heaving cloud of incense; and in our own Church at Benediction lavish use is made of the same material, and for the same kindred purpose, to awaken thoughts of God, and fill worshippers with a sense of God's near presence. Myrrh is a substance used in the East to prepare ointments meant to contribute strength, endurance and agility to the bodies of live athletes, and save dead bodies from quick decay and corruption. And this Child Christ, when grown a man, was to be, in the words of prophecy, a giant exulting to

run his course ; and at the end of His career His sacred body was to be prepared for burial by Magdalen with her hundred-weight of myrrh and aloes.

We cannot with the kings offer our Babe of Bethlehem gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Years ago on vow-morning we laid at His feet the gold of our wealth, actual and possible, the frankincense of our ambitions, the myrrh of bodily delights. We are paupers in the fullest sense of the term, and we glory in our degradation. We have no money, we have no desires of our own, and we have no claim to the legitimate pleasures of life. But we can renew the gifts made years ago, and leave this feast of the Epiphany more determined than ever to be poor, and chaste, and obedient. These kings on their knees in the straw before the crib with their gifts of gold are no welcomer to the new-born Infant than religious poor in spirit, poor in fact, stripped naked of wealth, and without a single desire for the luxuries wealth can purchase. In the eyes of God wreaths and columns of incense are without the majesty attaching to chaste lives, and the odor issuing from censers is less sweet than the warm sighs issuing from virgin hearts. In all the world's gardens the lily of innocence is God's chosen flower. Bitterness is the quality of commercial value in myrrh, and the bitterness of the myrrh these kings offered Christ was not by half so sharp and penetrating as the taste evoked by obedience when authority crosses our inclinations in religion, when it condemns ambition to the shades of obscurity and inaction, when it puts men of affairs out of the procession, when it drives slaves to

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the hill of skulls to die on a cross with Christ, to close a career of pain and disappointment in the midst of ignominy and shame. Poverty is the gold we religious offer Christ, chastity is our frankincense, and myrrh is our obedience. We burn a fat holocaust of wealth on the altar of God's love, we deny ourselves for God's sake the sweet smelling incense of honor and glory, and we are never without that harsh and unwelcome taste the myrrh of obedience stirs in the mouths, in the very souls of religious. Praise, worship and service are fittingly symbolized in gold, frankincense and myrrh, and in doing the Child Christ this three-fold homage we are acquitting ourselves of a fuller generosity than any the kings from the East displayed on this memorable occasion. Some see in the three gifts of the three kings vivid reminders of alms, prayer, and penance, the three good works so much commended in Scripture. Gold knows no higher use than charity or alms, prayer rises from earth to Heaven in much the same way as incense, and poor human nature is going to quarrel always with penance or mortification of the flesh as the palate rebels against the discomfort of myrrh. Among the virtues gold can be taken for token of charity, incense for token of hope, and myrrh for token of faith.

Therefore, we have no reason to envy these kings the rare privilege they enjoyed. Every day of the year we can renew in our lives this mystery of the Epiphany, and experience whatever joy inundated on this occasion the souls of the Magi. We can grow truer and truer to our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; we

can sing God's praises in fuller voice, we can warm our worship with newer and newer degrees of fervor, and we can widen our service by consecration to His commandments and loyalty to our rules. Day in and day out we can be kinder to our brothers and sisters in religion, we can become more and more enamored of the spirit of prayer, and we can get on friendlier terms with the spirit of penance and self-denial. Every day of the year, every hour of the day must witness a large addition to our love for God; hope must manifest itself in a supreme contempt for the meaner pleasures of this life, and strenuous endeavor towards the complete and perfect happiness awaiting us in the next; and faith must lift us from lower levels to that higher atmosphere where the light of the Sanctuary forever shines, where saints see things as they are, where every thought, every word, every deed are a new virtue, because supernatural faith is their motive.

XI

MORTIFICATION

“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry.” St. Matthew, 4, 2.

COMMENTATORS on this passage call attention to the fact that forty is a sacred number in Holy Writ. Before Christ, Moses and Elias had undergone a fast of the same duration. It would be presumption to assign with dogmatic precision any set motive as exclusively influencing Christ in His selection of a fixed period for His stay in the desert. And yet nothing prevents the devout mind from meditating a multitude of such motives, able to influence ordinary mortals, and, therefore, of appealing force with Christ. He may have hit on this plan with a view to teaching future workers in the kingdom that solitude, and prayer, and fasting are a most efficient kind of preparation for the ministry of preaching and teaching. He may have wished to furnish the devil, who was altogether in the dark regarding Christ's divinity, with an incentive to test His holiness. He may have purposed atonement for whatever gluttony attached to Adam's eating the forbidden fruit. He may have intended emphasizing the close relationship in force between contemplation and meagre fare, between fatness of spirit and leanness of body. Whatever may be said of the motives just enumerated,

everything persuades us to think that Christ wished to inaugurate and sanction in this mystery the holy fast of Lent, descended in His Church as an apostolic tradition, and everywhere observed by the faithful. St. Gregory sees in the forty days a reminder of the tithes or tenths exacted by Jehovah from the Jews. Lent is approximately thirty-six days, or a tenth part of the year. St. Ambrose sees in the same number a memorial of the forty halts or encampments made by the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to the land of promise. For this reason, perhaps, fast days are called in liturgical language, *stationes* or halts. We need hardly vouch for the stories told by a certain ancient writer of the forty days spent by the bear without food, to remedy his organs of digestion; or of the snake's habit of fasting the same length of time, to reduce his girth, and slip his old skin, preparatory to assuming another. The stories point a moral; and whether true or false, they have their uses. Nor need we discuss that theory of the university professor of medicine, who maintained that Lent happens along at that precise period of the year, when short rations and sea-food are of peculiar advantage to the body. With the coming of spring the heat of the blood rises, and fevers are in order, unless heavier food is set aside, and colder nutriment, like that afforded by fish, is eaten.

It is enough for us to know that fasting is one of the three good works, commended with emphasis everywhere in Scripture. It ranks in point of importance with prayer and alms-deeds. A small knowledge of human nature suffices to advertise us of its supreme

usefulness in bringing the body under subjection to the spirit; and till this process is first accomplished, holiness is out of the question. Fasting is an obligation of our fallen nature, it is a debt we owe Almighty God and ourselves. We have sins to expiate, and fasting is a means ready at hand to pay the debt. We have unruly passions to conquer, and every violence we do these bodies of sin is a distinct gain on the side of virtue. No man ever yet denied himself in food or drink for God's sake without receiving in return a new supply of grace, and a new supply of grace regularly means a new degree of glory. Sacrifice touches the very essence of religion; and there can be no sacrifice without the death or destruction of a victim. We must be the victims, penance must be the knife in our hands, ready always for rending activity. Man's soul is his pearl beyond price. His body one day falls to dust. And in spite of this knowledge, we are fonder of our bodies than we are of our souls. The sins we daily do are proof of the statement. We clothe our bodies with expensive garments, to kill the soul with vanity. We feed them, to cut short the soul's supply of prayer. Man's body is a heritage he holds in common with the beasts of the field. His soul is a memento of the angels. Body and soul are jealous rivals for his attention. In this prison-house of sin, where things material rule, where wickedness at every turn of the street spreads an alluring feast, the body has the advantage, and the soul goes hungry, waiting for the dawn of a new and spiritual life. The soul is in exile here. Its proper atmosphere is Heaven, and, unless we closely

watch and with a firm hand repress the body's appetites, the soul must take harm. What folly to sacrifice the interests of an immortal soul to the base pleasure of a dying body! And yet every sin is such a sacrifice. Men trample under foot every law of God, to procure some gratification for the body, and the soul must afterwards pay the penalty by eternal torments in the fires of hell.

Mortification is of two kinds, exterior and interior; and saints recognize three degrees or steps in the ladder to this difficult virtue's summit. Exterior mortification is chastisement of the body; and St. Paul is talking about it, when he says, "I chastise my body." I Cor. 9, 27. Interior mortification is chastisement of the spirit; and the Lord Christ had it in mind, when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." St. Matthew, 16, 24. All three degrees of mortification are embodied in that beautiful saying transferred by St. Paul from Psalms, 43, 22, to the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans, "For thy sake we are put to death all the day long." Romans, 8, 36. Among strangers to the faith exterior mortification is in small favor. That part of the world outside the Catholic Church is loud in its condemnation of the seeming cruelty saints practise on their own bodies. Fasting is denounced as an insult to God, a species of slow suicide. Whipping the body with cords or chains is styled superstitious and fanatical insanity. Long vigils before the altar are irreverently alluded to as a sure token of madness or weak-mindedness. This

same world admires the self-sacrifice of the mother who denies herself food to save a child from starvation. This same world applauds the heroism of the soldier returning from war with his body full of wounds. It praises the devotedness of the friend nursing a sick friend back to health at the expense of food, and sleep, and needed rest. When a child, a country, a friend are the objects of our pity and heroism, the sinful world is content; but when God is their object, the sinful world is up in arms against the homage. The world of sin is on no friendly terms with the God of holiness, and takes offense at every act of reverence done Him. But we have made God's friendship the end and aim of our existence, the fond aspiration of our life. He has stamped with His approval these little deeds of violence done the body, and we are determined to add to His pleasure, no matter what the cost. With St. Paul, we chastise our body. We fast, we scourge ourselves, we shorten our sleep, we submit ourselves to bodily discomfort.

God is no torturer, He derives no delight from the agony of His creatures. But He thoroughly understands the mechanism of our being. He knows well that a man's heart is the field of many a battle between the flesh and the spirit. He knows that every victory won over the flesh adds new strength to the spirit. He knows that sin is rooted in man's desire for bodily comfort and luxury of sense. Like a skilful captain, He wants us to attack His enemy and ours in its stronghold. He wants us to save our immortal souls at the expense of any amount of physical pain, and

wants us to crush out sin by weakening these bodies of ours, the seat of appetite for forbidden pleasures. There is a very marked connection between passion and robustness of body. Temperance in food and drink keeps the blood cool. Every pang inflicted on the body serves at least to remind us that we have not here a lasting city, and that we are journeying towards a home, where pain shall be no more. A habit of self-inflicted pain is a most effective remedy against running counter to God's law for purposes of pleasure. All this would be true, even if God granted no special measure of grace to heroism of the sort. But the truth gathers force when we reflect that God, who will not be surpassed in generosity, rewards every single act of bodily mortification with a new supply of grace. And ordinarily a new supply of grace wins for its recipient a new degree of glory.

The Master had interior mortification in view, when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." St. Matthew, 16, 24. This second kind of mortification, interior, is as much superior to the first or exterior, as the soul is to the body. It is a habit or fixed disposition of mind and heart, whereby we are ever on the alert to cross even our most innocent inclinations. It is in some sort a remodelling of our worse selves along heroic lines. Man's heart is a network of desires. Of these, some are virtuous; other some are wholly innocent, without being positive helps to sanctification; and others are clearly heinous, downright hindrances to salvation. Virtuous inclinations cannot, of course, be

too much encouraged, and, as they always embody a certain amount of difficulty for human nature, mortification has a wide field for exercise in their pursuit. Heinous inclinations, wishes with hell stamped all over them, must be done to death even before they begin to fully breathe in our bosoms. And mortification is not the virtue concerned with them. Common everyday piety, such as the most ordinary Christian professes, makes it imperative to slay such wishes. To harbor or encourage such wishes, is to sin; and mortification is something more than the mere avoidance of sin. Interior mortification, then, has for object those innocent inclinations forbidden by no law of God or man. The company and conversation of friends, the sweet comfort of family ties, a walk in the garden past the color and perfume of flowers, the vision of a pretty and cheerful face; all these and a thousand other alluring pastimes are the victims of interior mortification's sacrificial knife.

And God wants us to stand ready with the knife in our hand. He wants us to deny ourselves even these harmless gratifications, because such heroism is a choice act of homage to His Majesty, because He is aware how impossible it will be for soldiers thus assiduous in His service to play Him false, when sin crosses their path and temptingly beckons them to grosser and intenser pleasures. He puts a higher estimate on this second kind of mortification than on mere chastisement of body. In fact, mere chastisement of the body without interior mortification is of no value in God's sight. Heart-service is what He demands of His subjects,

and He accepts our fastings and scourgings only inasmuch as they manifest and promote inner submission of heart and will. The one valid excuse bodily penance has for existence is the single circumstance that we have no plainer way of declaring to the world a sincere conversion of heart, no more effective way of training our affections and aspirations in the school of God's discipline. If, therefore, we want to become close imitators of Jesus, if we want to come right after Him, we must first of all learn how to deny ourselves, how to put aside with a refusal promptings as free from wickedness as a baptized infant's smile. After this first lesson, the cross can prove no heavy burden, and every rough place in the path to perfection will lose its power to discomfort and incommode us.

And now about the three degrees of mortification, the three steps in the ladder to this difficult virtue's summit. All three, as before remarked, are embodied in that beautiful saying transferred by St. Paul from Psalms, 43, 22, to the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans, "We are put to death, for thy sake, all the day long." Romans, 8, 36.

—WE ARE PUT TO DEATH—

The first step is a state of passivity, in which we receive with resignation every trial God sends us. While in this stage, we are in the condition of a sheep led to slaughter, or a criminal led to execution. We may not, perhaps, go out to meet God with a song of thanksgiving on our lips; but we bow our heads to the

blow, and refuse to break the stillness with a word of complaint. We may not kiss the hand raised to strike us; but we make no endeavor to thrust it aside. We may not go out of our way to look for trials and troubles; but we are at least generous enough to stand bolt upright when they meet us, and nurse our damaged feelings without a murmur. When one weighs the amount of worry experienced by worldly friends, who are continually turning and twisting to avoid the shafts of misfortune aimed at them by God, when one considers the mad efforts made by these friends to escape the discomforts incident to human life, he cannot but thank religion for this first lesson in mortification, and cannot fail to see what a long stride towards the peace and contentment of Heaven he has made, who is climbed no higher than this first step in the ladder.

—FOR THY SAKE—

The second step is a state of activity, in which we receive with thankfulness humiliations, contempt and ill-treatment. To a man in the first degree humiliations, contempt and ill-treatment lose none of their bitter aspect. They are disagreeable, harsh and galling. But to a man in the second degree they wear altogether another countenance. They assume the blessed shape of favors vouchsafed by a kind Father. They are borne for this Father's sake, and the thought is honey in a cup of bitterness. Suffering loses all its edge, and opportunities to suffer are welcomed; yea,

counted and recorded with delight. We are not yet courageous enough to pray God to multiply our sufferings; but we are now no great remove from this third degree, and without experiencing any difficulty in resigning ourselves into the hands of God, we invite Him, when face to face with a threatened sorrow, to let the blow descend.

—ALL THE DAY LONG—

The third step is a state of sleepless activity, in which we ask for more and greater humiliations, afflictions and even persecutions. A man in this third degree is impatient of comfort and ease. His constant attitude of mind is that of St. Teresa making her sublime prayer, "To suffer or die, O Lord; to suffer or die!" When the third step in the ladder is reached, the end is reached. There are no more possible conquests in the field of mortification. God answers His servants' prayers, when their burden is so like the painful life His divine Son lived. He sends sorrow in abundance, and these servants reap a rich harvest of merit. Humiliations are heaped upon them at home, contempt is showered upon them abroad; and friends and strangers continue to persecute them even unto death. But those skilled in the science and the practice of the saints know what a store of consolation and strength the Master pours into the souls of such servants. They are living witnesses to the truth that God heals every hurt He makes, and has oil and balm for every wound

He inflicts. This manner of life is the peace of Heaven transplanted to earth. Heaven is absence of sorrow, and the very next thing to having no sorrow at all, is to cultivate a longing for it, to lose all dread of it by experiencing it frequently and touching it familiarly.

XII

SPIRIT OF LENT

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." St. Matthew, 20, 18.

LENT is a holiday time for the soul, and I like to think that you all view it in this light. It is a period of self-denial. Self-denial means self-control, and this in turn is responsible for whatever grand and glorious achievements history knows. This statement is abundantly true, no matter what shape human activity assumes, whether it be politics or war, business or a profession, education or virtue. And in no department of life is this solemn truth more conspicuous than in that of virtue. Apart from the grace of God, virtue is altogether the work of self-control, and every departure from virtue is preëminently due to lack of self-control. Control has practically all to do with character, and character is the man or woman. This is so true that a school of wrong-headed philosophers calling themselves Determinists or Necessitarians make will, which is in reality the mistress and sovereign queen of all our faculties and energies, docile servant to character, and proclaim man a slave to inherited tendencies, habits, environment and what not. This false doctrine encourages wickedness by persuading its victims to think that their conduct, whether virtuous or wicked, is quite beyond their control, that temptation in certain cir-

cumstances means inevitable defeat, and that whatever is right. It teaches criminals not to worry about their misdeeds, not to do violence to their most heinous inclinations, not to be restrained from wrong by dread of hell and its awful torments. In this system sinners are urged to shift the blame for their misdeeds on God Himself, on the disposition they got from their parents, on habits they unavoidably formed, on early surroundings, early education, early prejudices. Determinism teaches that in the event of certain conditions, every one of which is beyond his control, a man is as unable to avoid murder, theft, drunkenness, impurity, suicide, as the stone is to hang suspended in the air. This is comforting doctrine, indeed, for men of sin; and, if it once became universal, morality would die from the earth in a single generation. It is not good law to punish the insane, simply because they are incapable of responsibility, simply because deeds cannot be imputed to agents unable to reason and choose; and God Himself could not in justice punish sinners, such by force of temperament, or habits, or environment, or whatever else. And in Determinism man is as irresponsible as the veriest lunatic, he is able to reason without being able to choose, and his will invariably wants, his will can want, only what his character prescribes.

I mention Determinism, only to show what a preponderating influence in the esteem of men character has on conduct, and how wrong philosophers turn the fact to evil account, ascribing to character all the malice belonging of right to perverse and blameworthy abuse of free-will. In the field of morality no factor,

perhaps, apart from the will itself, exercises the same dread potency for good and evil as character; nothing, perhaps, is more a help to virtue, as nothing is more an incentive to vice. And character is no very profound mystery, it is the plainest of problems. All has been said when we remark that character is compounded of temperament and habits. Our temperaments or dispositions are common with the hereditary qualities we get from our parents; and, whether they are helps or hindrances to virtue and honesty, we must be content to employ them with thankfulness when they are helps, and supplement them with an abundant measure of good-will when they are hindrances. I am not responsible for the temperament I have, but I am responsible for its management. No mortal can shift on temperament the blame for mediocrity. Parents are indeed responsible for tendencies and traits their children inherit, they are not responsible for their children's crimes. Nobody can allow temperament to bind him hand and foot and drag him to ruin without trailing his dignity in the mire, without surrendering his birthright of liberty, without proclaiming himself an abject slave. Free will holds the key to the situation. Temperament is not omnipotent. It is a mighty factor for good or evil, but it is far from settling the question. Free will is mightier than temperament; and the man born for conspiracy, treason and murder, can by dint of assiduous care become conspicuous for honorable valor, a red hot patriot, a martyr in the cause of charity. The temperament of a degenerate, whose free will is not yet submerged, is as much an instrument

for good as the temperament of a saint. The degenerate has a harder road to travel, he has to walk with more care, more circumspection and more courage; but his feet are mercifully fitted for rough as well as smoother roads, and the precautions enumerated are within his power.

Temperament, therefore, is no insuperable hindrance to the cultivation of character, and of the two elements making up character temperament is less within our power than habit. Our temperament we never make, we receive it; but free will is its mistress, and when the heart is alert, temperament never slips control. Our habits we make for ourselves, they are the growth of scattered acts; and we form habits with our eyes wide open to the process and its consequences. Habits are even less a mystery than temperament. They are facilities along certain lines, due to the frequent repetition of separate and distinct acts. Nobody knows with certainty the exact number of times an act has to be repeated to form a habit, but everybody is agreed that a habit of music, for instance, is out of the question without days, and weeks and years of practice. And what is true of music, is true of painting, oratory, honesty, veracity, purity, all the acts and all the virtues, our moral as well as our physical activities. But what we would most of all insist on is the circumstance that our habits are distinctively home-products. We make them, we never receive them; and we are entirely and utterly responsible for the part they play in our lives. Even when habits are once formed, our wills are absolute, and supreme, and omnipotent lords of the sepa-

rate and distinct acts that originate them. Hence, nobody can hide behind habit for excuse. The criminal who is such from habit is even more blameworthy than the criminal such by surprise. Habitual crime is the growth of misspent years, and betokens an accumulation of shame. Wrong not rooted in habit may result from defective vigilance, want of experience, overwhelming temptation; and the law is more lenient with first offenders than with veterans in vice.

Though not omnipotent, habit is a mighty factor in the formation of character and consequent conduct; and, therefore, our habits call for supremest care. Education is little worth unless it contributes to the formation of mental and moral habits beyond reproach. Our years at school are the critical period in our lives. Men and women are made and unmade during this all important season; and the boy or girl who leaves school with wrong habits is practically beyond redemption, his or her fate is practically sealed for eternity. Novices are at school, and they can themselves apply the parable. Therefore, we ought to be supremely solicitous about the quality of our habits, and we ought to take serious thought about our equipment in habits. Measures must be taken to break with undesirable habits, and precautions must be employed to strengthen and multiply right tendencies in our character. We must encourage the good in us, keep down the evil; and the whole process is summed up in the one word, control. Nothing so develops character as self-control. Good habits result from repeated acts of virtue, bad habits are broken by repeated victories

over temptation to wrong; and control is fully equal to the double task. It is a two-edged sword, it cuts both ways. We are inclined to evil from our youth; we lean towards vice and away from virtue; we are swift to one, slow to the other; and self-control, while it keeps us from slaving to base instincts, urges us to develop the better side of our character. We are not all devil, and the angel within us is always looking for a chance to assert himself. Without an abiding habit of self-control success in life is absolutely out of the question. Without it we cannot hope for Heaven, without it we cannot reasonably expect to escape hell. Self-control is what makes men temperate, pure and honest; want of this quality is responsible for the drunkards, the libertines and the thieves that infest our large and small cities. No one agency that I know is more conducive to the cultivation of self-restraint than discipline, family discipline, school discipline, the discipline of the noviceship. Every time a boy obeys his parents at home, he is adding a new asset to his worth as a man. Every time a boy at school breaks off play at the sound of the bell, every time he shakes off laziness to grip his lessons, he is laying deep and strong the broad foundation for the towering edifice of a splendid career.

And what is true of a boy at home or at school is true of a Sister during the days of her novitiate. The novitiate is your one great school for the training of character and the formation of good habits; and control is the surest, as it is the mightiest, instrument at your disposal. You may read spiritual treatises till

you go blind, you may listen to sermons and conferences till you go deaf, you may pray till your knees actually hurt; you will accomplish just nothing in the work of holiness, unless you make this habit of self-control your own, unless you accustom yourselves from the beginning of your religious life to do steady violence to your tastes, and inclinations, and the promptings of nature. The novice who regularly keeps silence at appointed times, no matter how much tempted to break her rule, will be fully equal to the ordeal when later in life some more alluring temptation crosses her path, simply because she made self-denial a habit or instinct, and learned early how to derive intense pleasure from what covers the unmortified with killing pain. The novice who never parts her lips to criticise others, to talk of her sisters' faults, no matter how much tempted to do so by the flattery of a sympathetic and appreciative audience, will hold to the lovely habit all through life, and will live and die one of those angels in religion, in whose hands everybody's reputation is entirely safe beyond any danger of harm. The novice who sticks to her prayers in spite of poor success, and dryness, and desolation, who manages at least to keep awake when sleepest, who fights distraction when all her being clamors for the pleasure of mental dreaming and idle wandering, is in no great danger of abandoning prayer in after life, will not make the mistake of sacrificing meditation to less important duties, and must make rapid progress in this science of the saints, while becoming more and more enamoured of this lovely employment of the angels. And so we could run

through the entire day and its wide round of duties, discovering everywhere magnificent tributes to the intrinsic worth of self-control, every tribute a new and alluring incentive to take up the work of self-denial in good earnest, and keep at it till success crowns our efforts, till virtue becomes a habit, till silence becomes more a pleasure than conversation, till charity becomes more a pleasure than unkindness, till prayer becomes the one absorbing occupation of our life.

And of all the year Lent is the right and proper season for efforts in this direction. Control is in the air all through this blessed period of fasting, and prayer, and penance; and the example of all our neighbors round, not excepting men and women in the world, not excepting boys and girls at school, can reproach our laziness and spur us on to new and intenser endeavor; and in these dispositions we go up to Jerusalem with the Lord Christ. Easter is in the distance, the morning of a glad resurrection; and, to rise with Christ, we must die with Him to self, to sin, to that love of ease and personal comfort hitherto responsible for our mediocrity in virtue. Our way lies through the garden of agony, past the pillar and the crown of thorns, along the reddened streets of the Holy City, on and up to the very top of Calvary. But we hold His hand, our cross is no heavier than His; and, with the Lord Christ whispering comfort and encouragement into our ears, with the Lord Christ pouring new strength into our tired limbs, we can keep His bleeding footsteps, and walk the red mile of duty from end to end.

BOOK III

I

MEDITATION

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” St. Matthew, 18, 20.

EVERY day in our lives has its own set tasks, our years are only a collection of days, and in religion one day is very much like another. Nothing, therefore, can be more conducive to the soul's welfare than to run through the duties of a single day, and take measures with ourselves to discharge them in the most perfect manner possible, calling to our assistance every little help in the way of approved methods, practical suggestions and appealing motives. Very logically we begin at the beginning, not at the middle or end; and we start things with a talk on the day's first duty, morning meditation.

Meditation is a species of conversation with God, a talk with the Master; and all its attributes are gathered in that one word. Its dignity, its worth, its delight are all due to the single fact that it is conversation with God, audience with the Most High, a sort of spiritual entertainment that can be nowhere enjoyed outside the nearer presence of God. Faith alone can enable us fully and truly to appreciate the favor. Philosophy, of course, can help; but philosophy lets us into only half the truth, unless Faith supplements its

teaching. Philosophy, with God's attribute of immensity for subject, distinguishes a threefold presence of God in the universe. God, it tells us, is present everywhere in His power, in His wisdom and in His substance or person. A ruler is everywhere in his kingdom, the first way; he is everywhere in his palace, the second way; he is in the space his body fills, the third way. Immensity, therefore, is infinite filling presence, and it means that God is everywhere in substance or in person, not merely in power and in wisdom. This truth lends point to passages in Scripture like these—"Walk with care before the Lord—Walk before me, and be perfect." Gen. 17, 1. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." St. Matthew, 18, 20.

Wherever He happens to be, this God is King of Kings, and deserves the utmost reverence and respect. Meditation, therefore, is not the place for sleep, or distractions, or idle thoughts. In class we want every pupil's attention every minute between the bell for the beginning of class and the bell for the end. In conversation we want the friend we address to follow our remarks with care, without a yawn, without interruption, without any desire on his part to be elsewhere.

The God present with us at meditation is Lord of Heaven and earth, with every favor we can desire at His disposal. He is omnipotent to raise the dead, to cure the sick, to change fools to philosophers without need of study, to sweeten the bitterest sorrow, to transform night in the soul to the radiant splendor of middle summer. No affliction is too deep for His curing

touch, no calamity but yields to His almighty word, and disappointment loses all its sting when He ministers medicine to the hurt. He orders the winds, and they settle; He commands the waves, and they are still.

He is a Father come down from Heaven to pass an hour in your company, and meditation ought to be the most agreeable and comforting corner of the whole day. It is like the Children's Hour in a busy man's family, the one period of the day when he has opportunity to give all his attention to the little ones at home. The rest of the day we have other cares to distract us; and sometimes these cares are profound enough to tax our best energies, and momentous enough to demand all our attention. But our day always opens with a clear hour for prayer; and we are fit for the day's round of duties only after this morning audience with God. And God at meditation is God our Father. We are sons and daughters at God's knees to get instructions for our conduct, to get encouragement able to embolden us against the dangers ahead, to get the strength needed to make us superior to the temptations awaiting us, to borrow from His interest in our welfare the assurance of victory and ultimate success.

Somebody has remarked that we have small or no relish for prayer because it brings us uncomfortably close to God our judge; and, altogether unequal as we are to the test of sharp inspection, we prefer to avoid all inconvenience by shutting God from our thoughts and walking the easy way of distractions and idle imaginings. But God our judge never ceases to be God our Father, and the harshness of court solemnity and

judicial severity is easily forgotten in the atmosphere of the family circle, and in the tenderness suggested by the mutual love in force between a father and his children.

And God in Heaven is even more sympathetic and merciful than our father on earth, because He is all love and no hate, and because He knows us with a thoroughness able to detect motives for pity, that escape the notice of our very parents. The dying Christ saw something good in the penitent thief, and, in spite of the man's repeated transgressions of the law, handed him as he hung over hell the grace needed to make him a leading citizen of Heaven, and first martyr in the New Law. In spite of her early shame He saved Magdalene to holiness, and, though her misdemeanors lost to her the good esteem of Scribes and Pharisees, her large love for Christ won her a seat in Heaven, the favor of God and fame as undying as the ages. And this is the Father we address at prayer; the Father to whom we confide our big and little troubles; in whose hearing we rehearse our woes, remorse at the past, dissatisfaction with the present and a world of anxiety about the future. God sits here, you sit there; and the conversation begins.

But how are we to converse with God? There are rules to follow, and it would be presumptuous folly to disregard them. Rules are a help only when their use becomes a habit. Till this stage in the process is reached, rules are a hindrance. Without rules a mere child can paint and draw a-plenty; but all his work will be imperfect, and his pictures will never be hung in

the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When hampered by rules, his progress at first is slow, and a tedious process of thought precedes every line he draws. By degrees, thanks to his mastery of rules, painting or drawing becomes a habit, and he works faster and infinitely better than when he was an utter stranger to rules and trusted altogether to inspiration. The same is true for rules and cautions in the matter of meditation or conversation with God.

Memory, mind and will are the faculties employed at meditation, and masters of the spiritual life are at great pains to formulate and explain rules for their conduct and management. Everybody's experience is loud witness to the mutual interdependence of memory, mind and will. The mind goes only a short journey, unless memory stimulates it and carries it over barren places. Without previous work of the mind the will elicits no wish, and desire is at a standstill.

Of all the methods of meditation in current use, that proposed by St. Ignatius most approves itself to the Jesuit mind. It is eminently simple, easy, entertaining, in strict accord with common sense, suited to everybody, and its efficacy is abundantly proved by the test of centuries. And all because it makes meditation a species of conversation between the soul and God, putting it on the level with that commonest of daily experiences, quiet communion with self or a talk with the neighbor. Along with a small measure of earnestness, it calls for only the active and steady employment of memory, mind and will; and nobody is without these three powers of the soul. Entertain-

ment or pleasure is somewhere described as the bloom or efflorescence of activity, and meditation is all this with regard to the spiritual activities at our disposal, memory, mind, and will.

We distinguish three different times or periods, the time before, the time during and the time after meditation. The Master would have us pray always; and, when not actually engaged in formal prayer, we ought to be making ready for this supreme act of religion. Therefore, the time before prayer ought to be spent in preparation for prayer. This preparation is twofold, remote and immediate. Remote preparation consists entirely in removing from our lives hindrances to prayer, and procuring helps towards a healthy growth in the spirit of prayer. These hindrances are manifold. Chief among them are pride, hypocrisy, unholy thoughts, dissipation of mind and senses. By way of remote preparation we must besides busy ourselves to procure all necessary and conducive helps. We must earnestly strive to make our own the virtues of humility, sincerity, modesty and recollection. We must cultivate a fondness for spiritual reading. Much help can likewise be derived from a studied appreciation of mental prayer's grandeur and sublimity. It is converse with God. God is a spirit, and mental prayer is the kind of homage God wants. Nothing contributes more to growth in holiness. Only saints are thorough masters of its mysteries, and it is a gift God refuses to bestow on any but the strenuous in His service. Drudgery attends its early stages, and periods of desolation are always in order. We must buckle on the armor of

patience, and cultivate a species of endurance that no amount of work can break. Eagerness, hurry and anxiety are wholly out of place in this business of prayer. God in His own good time makes His presence felt, and the favor is worth years of waiting. Quiet and peace of mind are supreme requisites. When we reflect that the whole fruit of meditation consists in enlightenment of mind and strengthening of will, unease and anxiety are absolutely without excuse. Consolation, pretty fancies and the sweetness they occasion, are crumbs of comfort devoutly to be wished and to be received with thankfulness; but they are not prayer's leading purpose or its chiefest good. Finally, our love for prayer is going to be the last measure of our progress in prayer. Nobody ever yet made a good meditation without looking forward to the hour with a certain longing and a live desire to come out of the hour better than he entered it. By way of immediate preparation for prayer, we must make our own a habit of the so-called Ten Additions of St. Ignatius. Another precaution to be taken is to read the points of the morning meditation the night before, and determine the fruit to be derived from it.

Approaching now the time during meditation, we can study its beginning, its middle and its end. The preparatory prayer and the preludes constitute its beginning; the exercise of memory, mind and will, its middle; and the colloquy, its end. The preparatory prayer must be made with serious attention and deep devotion, weighing each sentence with care, and tasting the sweetness resident in every word. The preludes

are two or three, as the case may be; and they are the history, the composition of place and the petition. And now for the main part of the work, the body of the meditation, turning on the exercise of memory, mind and will. In our employment of the memory we can help ourselves by recalling the Latin line left us by rhetoricians as a brief summary of the topic called Circumstances, "Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando," meaning, "Who, what, where, with what helps, why, how, when." By successively asking and answering these several questions we can equip our minds with a full knowledge of the mystery. Armed with this complete knowledge of our subject, we next apply mind and will. We keep mentally busy by prodding our minds with questions like these, What am I to think of this whole thing? What practical lesson for the conduct of my life can I derive from the story? What incentives urge me to practise the virtue now proposed, to imitate the example now before me for study? What natural, what supernatural advantages are bound to result from my mastery of the virtue? How pleasant how easy, how necessary it is to institute a reform? What has been my conduct in the past, what will it be in the future? What hindrances and what helps hide in the future? All through this work of the mind the will is busy entertaining feelings or emotions as varied and numerous as the thoughts arising in quick succession. Wonder, fear, humility, confusion, sorrow, shame, praise, love, are some of these emotions; and, while giving free rein to them, the heart ought to accustom itself to familiarity with

them. Resolutions too are everywhere in order, practical and particular; built on sound principles; suited to our state in life, our surroundings and our occupations; humble and limited to one day at a time. The whole exercise closes with a brief recapitulation of the work done during the hour, with a colloquy and some set vocal prayer like the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Anima Christi. What takes place after the meditation we call the Reflection. In this we take account with ourselves, seeing whether we acquitted ourselves creditably or otherwise during the hour. We search out the reasons of success or failure, thank God for the success, note whatever helped to this fortunate issue, conceiving sorrow for the faults admitted, along with a firm purpose of amendment on future occasions. We conclude by noting the lights and resolutions mercifully vouchsafed us by God's grace during the hour, along with the principles on which they are based, framing some short motto that embraces in a word the whole scope of the day's meditation.

And this is prayer, the little golden chain that binds us to the feet of God, our ladder to the skies, the open door to closer union, the ready means to keep us in near touch with God in spite of the worlds between. This prayer is a vivid reminder that all is not over when we die, that we are headed for another and a truer home, that the present life is but a short chapter in our history, with the uncounted chapters of eternity to follow. God likes homage. He likes acknowledgment. He likes to be thanked for His favors; and prayer is homage most welcome to His heart, prayer is

tribute rendered His omnipotence by creatures overwhelmed with a sense of their weakness and insufficiency, prayer is the pledge and earnest that we are not robbed of our good manners by prosperity, and that we stand loyal to Providence in the buffets of misfortune. The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and we dismal beggars need only study our own hearts, and profit by the experience, to address God in becoming sentiments. Where people are not fools, to know self is to be humble; to pray is to play the beggar, and the poor are wide awake to their degradation and insignificance.

II

MEDITATION

"And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel." Apocalypse, 8, 4.

WE are not yet done with morning prayer. In religion we are builders, intent on rearing the house of our holiness; and, since one day is very much like another, we can restrict ourselves to the morrow, and not worry about the days and years beyond. The morrow's house must be built of the morrow's acts; they are its material, the brick and the mortar, the iron and wood. Morning prayer is foundation and support for the whole superstructure; and, to avoid trouble, we want to be sure about the foundation before we go ahead. Hence the need of another talk or two on meditation. We want to stir within ourselves a fondness for this employment of the angels, and to study the question to its very depths.

We can best begin by recalling some of the praises of prayer scattered up and down the Scripture. Sweet-smelling incense is perhaps the commonest and most appealing symbol for prayer in Holy Writ; and none other sets forth its attractiveness in a more winning way. The circumstance, no doubt, accounts for our Church's lavish use of incense at Benediction and

other solemn ceremonies. Like the prayers of the saints, clouds of incense roll Heavenward, and as they rise awake in eye and nostril most pleasurable sensations, akin to the feelings their counterpart provokes in the mind and heart of God. The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds; and, because of its acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion, prayer is a sweet-smelling holocaust in the nostrils of God. Every prayer we make is at the same time a silent testimony to our own weakness and to the omnipotent might of the personage to whom we address the prayer. An atmosphere of incense is an atmosphere of prayer, the haze it pours round the altar-throne is suggestive of mystery; the majesty of its motion, the quiet it creates, preach everywhere the near and penetrating presence of God.

Angels, we are told, carry the prayers of the elect to the feet of God, to return earthward with the graces and blessings they purchase. Raphael bears eloquent witness to the fact in that sublime discourse he had with Tobias of old. These angels are still ministering spirits, their occupation as messengers between God and men is still a blessed reality, and the ladder Jacob saw in his dreams, with angels moving up and down its endless length, is no empty picture of a pious fancy, but as true and real as any fact our eyes encounter in daily life. Faith sees where these eyes of flesh fall blind, and the discoveries of faith are whole worlds more substantial than the discoveries of science, because God's word pledges their truth with a security denied our very senses.

When deep in prayer, with all five gateways of the soul shut tight against the things of sense, God is with us in the same close way He was with the Virgin Mary before the Incarnation, and, what is even more comforting and more encouraging, we are with God much as Christ was with the Father in the desert of fasting and in the garden of agony. I like the piety of that old father, who when entering retreat hung on his door the unusual sign, "With God for eight days." It was so true to life, it was a sermon so tightly packed with lessons of faith that it stirred all the poetry, and eloquence, and religion in a body's being. And every time we visit the chapel, every time we finger our beads in our room or along the walks, every time we bow our heads in prayer, we are alone at last with God, we are leaving the world with Christ, to go with Christ to the Father.

Another consideration able to awaken a fondness and enthusiasm for meditation is the thought urged by St. Thomas and vouched for by sound theology. Providence has arranged from eternity to distribute its favors only in what measure men ask for them. "Ask, and you shall receive," can be translated to mean, "Fail to ask, and you shall not receive." Therefore, favors are granted by God, and favors are withheld only in what measure men pray or refuse to pray, and God's best gifts are in men's power. Everybody holds the key to God's treasury of good things; and, if some of us are paupers in grace and virtue, we have our own folly and laziness to blame for the misfortune. This one thought can keep us to our duty, and sober study

of the truth it contains can terrify us into the habit of scrupling and dreading the waste of a single minute at meditation. To neglect prayer, is to invite God to strike us off the list of His friends, and serve Him notice that we want no gifts, and have no need of His bounty.

What bread is to the body, prayer is to the soul. With other food gone, bread can sustain life, and no other food can quite make up for the absence of bread. The soul needs nourishment as well as the body, and in one case and the other the process of feeding is without end. Food taken today will be of small service to the body tomorrow; breakfast, dinner and supper are meant for the day to which they belong, not for another; and the soul will be weak Tuesday, if it depends altogether on the meditation made Monday. Every day in religion opens with its morning hour of prayer, and brief intervals of prayer are inserted here and there in the day's progress. Every defection from religion, every loss of vocation, as well as every wide departure from strict observance in religion, is ascribed by holy writers to wanton neglect of prayer, and experience lends their authority weight. For this very reason meditation would seem to be the first duty in the day's list attacked by tepidity, and the circumstance is only another tribute to the destructive sagacity of the tempter. His method is a species of poisoning the wells, a kind of effective blockade designed to reduce the soul to subjection by cutting off the soul's food supply.

Prayer is even more than mere food for the soul, it is besides a tonic of the most astonishing efficacy. Mere

life is little worth without that robust vigor and elevation of spirit responsible for all the splendid achievements in history. Meditation puts us on closer terms with ourselves, lets us deeper into our heart's secrets, and opens our eyes wide to the blemishes as well as to the glories in our character. And nothing, perhaps, is more an incentive to mighty effort than familiar acquaintance with the meannesses and the grandeur of which we are capable. We are more on our guard against disaster, when aware of the danger; we are fitter for grand undertakings, when intimately aware of our native strength. Self-knowledge is a direct result of sober meditation, self-reproach or self-congratulation naturally follows; and I hardly know which of the two is the greater power for good in the spiritual life. Reproach is an unfailing corrective, and the medicine loses none of its healthfulness, when in meditation we administer the dose to ourselves. Nothing succeeds like success, and the courage born of one victory invariably paves the way to another.

Meditation, therefore, is a most effective weapon for the avoidance of sin and growth in virtue; and the way meditation accomplishes this double result is no very profound mystery. It works wonders in its patron's life because it calls into play his intellect and his will, compelling the two faculties to work in consummate harmony, one supplementing the other's weakness, and so producing a perfect work. The intellect without the will is dead, and in the domain of conduct counts for nothing. The will without the intellect is blind, and in the field of ethics is responsible for whatever

economic and moral abuses history knows. Meditation on self or knowledge of one's personal faults compels petition for supernatural assistance; and desire gets busy in the will, when dearth of good is emblazoned in the intellect. And that is the way meditation works. His intellect acquaints the man with his nakedness in good, his crookedness of conduct; and his will, dissatisfied with the wretched condition of affairs, moves for immediate reform. To use the intellect is to think; and salvation is out of the question without the deepest and soberest kind of thinking. All the world is gone wrong, because nobody thinks in his heart, is the prophet's tribute to the need of intellectual work in the affair of holiness. He ascribes all the evil in the world to want of reflection and serious thought. The importance of keeping the mind busy at prayer can be gathered from the disastrous results attaching to mental idleness and lazy dreaming.

And, while on this topic of thinking at prayer, it may prove a help to progress to reflect that honest effort can win for us that superior kind of knowledge called wisdom or philosophy, knowledge of things in their last and most universal causes. We distinguish between mere knowledge, science and wisdom. The uneducated know things, but they have small or no reasons for what they know. Men of science have reasons for what they know, but they are regularly superficial reasons, never getting beyond the outer shell or surface of things. They know what things can do, they never know what things are and why. Wisdom is the inheritance of philosophy, and wisdom searches the na-

ture of things to its very depths, wisdom knows what things are and why, wisdom stands for the highest and supremest effort to which created minds can of themselves attain. This wisdom is the fruit of incessant thinking, and the mind busy at prayer cannot fail of wisdom. Saints at prayer see God in a way denied the rest of mortals, they actually touch Christ, and they make their own secrets in purity, patience, humility, obedience, that quite escape the notice of ordinary minds. Of course, the whole purpose of meditation is growth in devotion and progress in virtue; and solid devotion is based on reason, not on empty emotion, it is the product of intellect and will together, while progress is lasting only when reason lends all its approval to the will's efforts toward holiness. Principles are the work of the mind, and while a man may without principles be true to duty for a day, he cannot without their help be true to duty for a lifetime.

Meditation without work of the mind is bad enough, but meditation without work of the will is worse. Rodriguez likens meditation without emotions of the will, without elevations of the heart, without resolve and determined purpose, to the insane process of sewing without thread. Small good attaches to pushing a needle empty of thread through the cloth; and smaller good results from mere application of the mind at prayer without passage to lively emotions and generous resolves. All such meditation is barren study; in the Kingdom of God study counts for little unless it colors conduct, and prayer of the kind leaves the

petitioner where it finds him. The whole purpose of meditation is deeds, not thoughts; and work of the mind is useful only in what measure it serves to suggest and solidify emotions with a bearing on the different virtues. For this reason scarcity of thoughts at meditation is no sign of failure. One single thought can base a thousand different emotions, and fewness of thoughts is oftener than not a help to richness in emotions and practical results.

III

MEDITATION

"Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation."
St. Matthew, 26, 41.

ONE more try at prayer, and we leave the subject. Prayer is a means, not an end. It was never intended merely to keep holy the opening hour of the day. It accomplishes that blessed result too, but it is mainly designed to reach out to the rest of the day, and crowd all its hours till bedtime with virtues adverted to during its progress and settled on for strenuous practice. It is meant to kill passion from the soul and encourage virtue; and, before entering on the work of meditation, we ought to know definitely what fruit is to be reaped from the exercise in hand, whether it be emancipation from some passion or new allegiance to some virtue. St. Ignatius makes provision for this in his second prelude, and before retiring we ought to run over in our mind the particular good to be derived from the morning meditation. And right here it is sad to have to acknowledge that we are at small pains to hold ourselves to the task of singling out a passion for attack, a virtue for practice. In this business of sin and virtue knowledge means cure, and we want to be sick. We could easily rise from our faults and imperfections, if we earnestly desired to do so; we could

easily make any virtue our own, if honestly intent on its possession. We are wofully lazy in the service of God; and, rather than make trouble for ourselves, we walk in darkness, and enter meditation with a comforting ignorance of any previous and pertinent purpose. When a patient wants to be sick, he can baffle the skill of the physician; and God Himself is helpless, unless we want to be cured, and take every single precaution calculated to effect a cure.

We cannot complain that the subject of the meditation is ill-suited to our particular wants. No matter what the subject, it can be turned to good account. Matter for meditation is like the manna of old, and that miraculous food assumed whatever taste the palate desired. Every subject is manna, whether it be a mystery in the life of Christ, or a truth in philosophy, or a random thought; and every subject will suggest, awaken, excite whatever emotion the soul wants. We ought to be in no hurry to pass from one feeling or emotion to another; and, while encouraging whatever emotion stirs in the soul, we must single out the most needed, and give it the best part of our attention and energy. No virtue but is open to methods and motives without number. Purity, for instance, can be practised in thought, in word, in deed, and desire; and the subject is far from exhausted till all four departments are sounded and examined. Humility admits of three degrees, and more besides; and our study of the virtue is superficial unless we search its very depths by a steady look at all its different degrees. Like purity, it can be practised in thought, word, deed and desire;

at home and abroad; alóne and in company; at chapel and in class; in gait, apparel and conversation. Obedience offers even a wider field. There is obedience of execution, will and judgment. There is obedience paid a prudent, and obedience paid an imprudent superior; obedience paid a superior, whose ways we admire, and obedience paid a superior whose ways we abominate; obedience when orders are easy, and obedience when orders are hard; obedience when authority's wishes are in harmony with our own, and obedience when authority seems set against our most cherished inclinations. And, if time allowed, what volumes could be said of motives in the shape of different incentives urging us to practise purity, humility, obedience, all the various virtues; some supernatural, others natural; some suggested by our conduct in the past, some prompted by care for the future; personal peace and happiness, comfort of others, zeal for souls, the esteem of Christ, the glory of God, and edification of the neighbor.

At meditation we ought to touch, and fondle, and kiss the crosses Providence is shaping for the day ahead; some trouble we anticipate in class, some reprimand we expect from authority, some unkindness at the hands of a companion, some disappointment we cannot escape, some failure awaiting our stupidity, our perverseness, our crookedness of character. Crosses grow lighter, when weighed beforehand, and St. Gregory says that arrows hurt less when you see them coming. Before he goes to the plate, a batter swings two bats, throws one aside, and the single bat

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he uses feels light as a feather. Never hesitate to return again and again to the same virtue. If today's meditation fails to settle things, if acts of the virtue fail to follow, tomorrow's meditation or that of the day after may finish the business, and put you in possession of what you want. In the quaint imagery of old Rodriguez, when the iron on the anvil loses its glow, the blacksmith plunges it again into the forge, and at each successive cooling repeats the same process. Much of the discontent attaching to meditation has its origin in a mistaken notion of prayer's purpose. It is well to remember that prayer's purpose is always within our reach, and we sometimes imagine that its purpose borders on the impossible. When we attempt the impossible, we are doomed to almost certain failure, and in this business of prayer timid souls often think themselves failures when they are splendid successes. They get out of morning meditation all the good it contains, and yet because they miss a something which depends not on themselves but on the tender mercy of God, or on their mental alertness, or on the physical condition of their body, they vote the whole hour wasted time, and heap themselves with unnecessary and undeserved reproaches. All the use of morning meditation lies in its influence on the day that follows. Its whole fruit is limited to the salutary restraint of a single day's thoughts, words and deeds. All its merit is not in the sweetness of consolation, not in abundance of pretty or subtle fancies and thoughts, not even in success as the world rates things; but in quiet effort, in constancy, in perseverance. Medita-

tion is good if it makes you better, if it contributes to your growth in virtue, if it strengthens you for the fight with temptation and passion. To pray always, is the test set by the Master; and, while the obvious sense of these words demands uninterrupted union with God, they can be interpreted to mean fidelity to prayer at the times and places appointed by rule. In this sense, to omit a morning meditation, is not to pray always; and to encourage harassing and ill-founded thoughts regarding your seemingly small success at prayer, is to get yourself ready for the utter abandonment of prayer as wanton waste and abuse of the golden minutes assigned by rule to prayer. It means a whole lot, it means everything to keep at meditation day in and day out in spite of desolation, in spite of aridity, in spite of whatever disappointing features clamor for instant condemnation. We ought to be sorry for whatever faults find their way into our meditation, especially when they are deliberate and due more to malice than to weakness, we ought to take measures with ourselves to correct them, and bar their future occurrence; but we ought not to be overwhelmed with despair, we ought not to forget our ability to recover ourselves, we ought not to surrender energy and good will, no matter what mistakes pause our progress or rob us of good conceit.

Distractions are a besetting annoyance to devout souls intent on proficiency in prayer. They hinder a world of good, and much of the harm they work is due to wrong views regarding them. Naturally speaking it is impossible to be without distractions at prayer,

and only a special grace of God enabled some saints to pray without the discomfort they provoke. Since, therefore, it is next to impossible to escape them even without fault of our own, it must happen that they are not always open to blame. Oftener than not they are opportunities for merit mercifully sent our way with a view to perfecting our patience, our humility, our confidence in God and generosity in His service. They can be forced on us by the enemy, our minds are not always in complete control, and imagination is a most rebellious faculty. We remember things we ought to forget, and pictures we most hate clamor for our attention with most persistence. Distractions are wrong, only when voluntary, deliberately sought and dwelt on with pleasure. When they occupy our minds against our wishes, when they happen along without any warning, and swarm into our thoughts under cover of surprises, when they annoy, harass, and oppress us with discomfort, distractions are no great harm, and our whole duty is to pursue our way quietly to the hour's end, making serious endeavor to atone for losses, incurred through distractions at the beginning or middle of the meditation, by deeper recollection and new industry towards its close. The one danger to be guarded against is laziness, tepidity, and that faintness of heart which inevitably leads to the utter abandonment of meditation. A habit of union with God all through the day is supremest remedy for distractions due to our folly, idle curiosity and distaste for spirituality. Foreign thoughts find no room in minds already crowded with God and the things of God, and

meditation exerts a strain only where minds are tainted by worldliness, and hearts are not yet captive to absorbing love for God. Distractions suggested by the enemy must be fought as soon as we awake to their presence; and the readiest way to exasperate and finally overcome the devil is to persevere in calm and quiet, returning after each encounter to the task in hand. Some of our distractions are rooted in native weakness of mind and will; and they can be turned to good account by momentarily dwelling on them, and deriving from them abundant matter for self-reproach, emotions of humility and self-abasement in the presence of God.

Let me invite your serious attention to this other suggestion. I feel intimately persuaded that the mistake it notices is responsible for much of the poor success attending our meditations, and our slow progress in this art of the saints. We approach prayer without that sense of reality this sublime function demands. An air of unreality is everywhere evident in our prayers, and nowhere, perhaps, is it more conspicuous than at morning meditation. God is real, the gifts of God at our disposal are real. His readiness to help us is no flight of a poetic fancy, but as real as the table at my side or the words I now utter. We are real, our wants and needs in the spiritual and temporal order are painfully real, and the petitions we make are no empty exercise in rhetoric or lines in a play, but the impassioned appeal of a child to his father, of a criminal at the bar to the judge ready to pronounce sentence. And yet in spite of these solemn truths, we

behave at meditation as though the whole thing were a dumb show, or rehearsal, or an elocutionary effort. God is not real, or at least His reality impresses us with no great emphasis. His gifts are not real, or at least they stir within us no overwhelming desire. His readiness to help is no reality, or at least we leave meditation with the suspicion that God takes no interest whatever in our concerns. This is all wrong; and the sooner we correct the thing, the better. Our faith and our love need a very substantial renewal, and, till they assume sturdy enough proportions to banish this sense of unreality at meditation, we are inevitably doomed to grow weaker and weaker in this supreme business of prayer. Old Rodriguez wants us to feel, when face to face with some mystery in the life of Christ, much as a widow feels when some word in conversation recalls the memory of a dead and well beloved husband. Recollection of his good qualities can actually start tears, and she is quite overcome by remembrance of the happier times they spent together. The trouble of the thing is that the dead husband is more a reality with the widow than God or Christ is with us. If God really and truly sits here, if you really and truly sit there, distractions ought to have no place at prayer, and the hour of meditation ought to be the busiest as well as the happiest hour of the whole day. Another word, and I am done. Nobody ever yet made a good meditation, unless he looked forward the night before with a certain amount of enthusiasm to the morning hour of prayer, and determined to come out of the hour better than he entered it.

IV

THE PURIFICATION

“And after the days of her purification were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.” St. Luke, 2, 22.

THIS Feast of the Purification is likewise known as Candlemas Day. In accordance with a tradition as old as the Church, candles are blessed at morning Mass for service on the altar throughout the year, and distributed among the faithful for use at home in cases of emergency. This feature of the feast is due to the fact that our Church accommodated herself as far as possible to the usages of early Rome, when she won that nation from paganism to the true faith. She rooted out their riotous feasts and heathen practices by planting in their stead corresponding solemnities, in which the true God was worshipped by prayer and by the homage of good works. In pagan Rome the opening days of February were consecrated to Ceres, the goddess of crops, and peculiarly revolting rites marked the event. Men and women in varying stages of nakedness ran through the streets with burning torches, and crime of the most repulsive kind enjoyed the orgies of a holiday. When these pagans became Catholics, our Church, to wean their thoughts from anniversaries of the sort, inserted the feast of Candlemas in her calendar, and ordained a procession in the church,

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the faithful bearing lighted candles, to the accompaniment of prayers and hymns. The custom may likewise be a delicate allusion to the words of prophecy uttered by Simeon, when on this day he took the Child Jesus in his arms and said, "A light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." St. Luke, 2, 32.

This mystery of the Purification commemorates an event in the Virgin Mary's life, fuller of instruction than of splendor. In the Magnificat she calls herself the handmaid of the Lord, and in the language of song sets forth the praises of humility. On this present occasion she furnishes us with a striking display of respect for the law, and utter disregard for the perverted prejudices or opinions of men. Obedience and humility are the two conspicuous virtues in this mystery, and we are in dire need of the lesson. Complying to the letter with every prescription ordained Hebrew women by Moses in Leviticus, Mary as a law-abiding mother in Israel acquits herself of a threefold service. She presents herself to the priests in the temple to be declared free of the legal stain contracted in childbirth; she makes offering of two turtle-doves, one for penalty, the other for purposes of sacrifice; and she purchases her first-born from the Lord with five shekels of silver, equivalent to something less than five dollars in our money. Strictly speaking, she was not amenable to this law. She was immaculate, and her Son was not born like the rest of men. His miraculous birth saved Child and Mother from all suspicion of uncleanness, moral or legal. But Mary would be a

partisan of the law, and the behavior of Jesus in the Circumcision was motive enough for her conduct. His Circumcision stamped Him a sinner in the eyes of men; and, because it was a law in Israel, He submitted to the humiliation. Her Purification ranked her with ordinary mothers; and, to teach us obedience, she hid her splendid prerogative as Mother of God, and welcomed the indignity. Obedience is always on the alert for occasions. It is greedy for opportunities to exercise itself. Men truly obedient waste no time disputing the nature of an order. They scorn to measure with close exactness its binding force, or to study with anxious care authority's right to impose the obligation. Insistence on privilege is a tenet of the new gospel, and finds a readier place in the school of the Big Stick than among the meek disciples of the meek Christ, who know the future weight of glory present wrongs and sorrows work unto the elect. Besides, humility waxes strong in the midst of humiliations, and obedience is subjection of mind and will, the heaviest humiliation human nature knows. Men are jealous lovers of their liberty; and the saints for God's sake and virtue's, do steady violence to this inborn craving.

In St. Luke's story of the Purification, next to the Child and His parents, Simeon is the commanding personage. He is an old man, just and devout; and the speech he makes is as touching a piece of rhetoric, as sublime a sermon, as literature knows. Age adds a charm and authority all its own to a speaker's words; and in this case the orator is voicing sentiments that clamored for expression all the long interval between

a promise made him by God and its fulfillment. He is besides a prophet, and God suggests the words he employs. Holy writers tell us that Simeon was 112 years old that day he wandered into the temple with God's Holy Spirit for guide. No doubt, he had often before entered the holy place on the same errand, to return home disappointed. But his hopes were not broken, and day after day he persevered in his search for the expected of nations among the children brought to the temple. And all his conduct is a most persuasive argument in favor of steadfastness in prayer. God has promised us, as He promised Simeon, that we shall not taste death till we see salvation with our very eyes; and we must keep them wide open for the favor, and seek it incessantly in His house of prayer. The justice of Simeon is plain from the double tribute 'St. Luke pays his holiness. The Holy Ghost, the author of sanctifying grace, was in him, and he enjoyed the supernatural favor of prophecy. The hours he spent at prayer in the temple, waiting for the consolation of Israel, prove him a most devout man, a man of desire, like Daniel the prophet.

Naturally speaking, everything contributed to the growth of anxiety in Simeon's soul this morning of the Purification. No doubt, he had left home full of the idea that some tremendous event was on the eve of accomplishment. His faith was firm, and he rested secure in the thought that he could not die without first seeing with his very eyes the promised Messiah. He would stake the world against any chance of God's failure to keep His word. On the other hand he knew

that the weeks of prophecy were accomplished, and that other passages in the prophets with a bearing on the Messiah were already verified. Israel, spiritually bankrupt and politically broken, was never in direr need than now for the consolation the Messiah's coming promised. He was himself far advanced in years, he had long since passed the allotted age of man, and could look forward to only a short stay among the living. Verily he came by the Spirit into the temple this morning, and these several considerations urged him to scan with more than ordinary care the mothers of Israel and their children, awaiting the rites of the law at the hands of the priest. Some extraordinary light in the shape of a halo must have enveloped Mary, or the Child Jesus, or both, enabling Simeon to separate them from the rest of the group. At last the burden of his wishes is accomplished, God's word comes true; and unable to restrain himself, the old man moves through the worshippers to the side of Christ, takes the Child of miracle in his arms, and to the surprise of Mary, Joseph and the surrounding multitude breaks into that even-song of rapture, with which every priest and every nun close the day in the Compline of the Divine Office, "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

What a vivid reminder of communion the whole thing is! And with what relish we ought often to taste the sweet words, "Now thou dost dismiss," and

all that follows. Every morning of the year we more than take Jesus into our arms, we take Him into our hearts, not to hand Him back to His Mother, but to keep Him prisoner between communion and communion. Every morning of the year we enjoy the rare favor longed for to no purpose by Abraham, Moses, David and the others, compelled to see and greet the Messiah from afar, deferred in the case of Simeon to the evening of his days. What a eulogy he preaches on the death of the just! He invests this last sad act in a man's life with a loveliness that almost makes it welcome. It is a servant's dismissal or release from his appointed labors. We are workmen afield, waiting for the evening bell to summon us home to sit down to supper at the table of the Lamb. Nor is that peace which settles on a saint's deathbed absent from the picture; peace with God, peace with self, peace with the world; all culminating in the courage prompted by sure victory, the joy resident in the secure possession of God. Simeon is at peace with God, because the desire God's promise stirred is satisfied and still; he is at peace with himself, because he sees salvation, and the burden of his hopes is accomplished; he is at peace with the world, because, on the eve of departure from its dangers, the Child in his arms is the single treasure it contains. And he hurries towards Limbo exultant with the thought that he will be the first from earth to carry definite news of the Messiah's advent to his imprisoned fathers, the patriarchs, kings and prophets of ancient Israel. His eyes have seen the lovely form,

his bosom has felt the warmth, his cheeks have touched the breath of God's salvation, the Saviour Christ, prepared before the face of all peoples.

And here Simeon the poet ceases, Simeon the prophet begins. With eyes borrowed from God he sees the apostles leaving Judea to carry salvation to the four corners of the world, a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel. Before the Messiah's coming, the world of morality outside of Israel was enveloped in darkness, a veil resting between men and virtue. The gentiles knew the Natural Law, but scorned keeping it. In the far East tribes killed their parents, wives and children, and pretended to think foul murder a deed of piety, a deed of charity, a deed of patriotism. In Sparta boys were trained in the art of stealing, on the pretext that the accomplishment contributed to growth in political smartness and crafty cunning. In Greece and Rome vice in its most revolting shape was worshipped in public processions on the street, on the plea of thanksgiving for rich harvests and seasons of plenty. Christ came as a light shining in darkness; the veil fell from men's eyes; murder, theft, impurity appeared in all their native horridness; and a new world regenerated by Christianity was on its way to all the mental and moral blessings of present-day civilization. Crime still afflicts the earth, crime shall continue to afflict the earth till the end; but, since the Gospel was first preached, ignorance is now less an excuse than ever. Sinners have to shut their eyes tight against the light,

and men's hearts are more to blame than their heads. They know the right in a way denied the gentiles, they lack the moral courage needed to stand to duty.

And the Lord Christ is Israel's crowning glory and her crowning shame. Barring the sojourn in Egypt, He lived all His thirty-three years within the narrow limits of Judea. His parents were Jews, His friends were Jews, His twelve apostles were Jews. The first Pope in His Church was a Jew, as was its first ambassador to the world at large. All His miracles were worked in favor of Jews or their near neighbors. All His sermons were preached to Jews, and, when leaving earth, He instructed His workmen to give their first care and attention to the Jews. And, in spite of it all, the people who refused Him shelter that first Christmas night were Jews; the Herod who contemplated His murder was a Jew; the priests, Scribes and Pharisees who hounded Him from place to place were Jews. The Judas who betrayed Him was a Jew; Jews arrested Him in the garden; accused Him before the Roman governor; and Pilate signed His death-warrant only at the instigation of the Jews. And since the glory of Israel died on the cross, the children of His murderers are a marked race. They wander up and down the universe without a country, without a king, without a place of honor in modern history.

This burst of prophecy lays bare all of God's economy regarding Jew and gentile, the reprobation of Israel and the glorification of the nations; and everybody within sound of the prophet's voice must have been impressed beyond the telling. St. Luke pauses

to remark that the Child's parents wondered, and all present must have shared their wonder. No single doubt regarding Simeon's utterances crossed Mary's mind or Joseph's. Nothing forbids us to think that they knew as much about the future as the speaker; and they wondered only at the vividness of Simeon's narrative. In his capacity of priest Simeon then blesses the Child's parents, and finishes his story of Israel's condemnation and the world's redemption in Christ, with a clear and pointed reference to the Saviour's Passion and death on the cross. He addresses his words to Mary, because Joseph is to be gathered to his fathers before Christ begins His public ministry. While Mary watches the divine tragedy from the foot of the cross, Joseph will follow events from his appointed place in Limbo. The sword Simeon has in his thoughts will pierce Mary's heart, not Joseph's; and he, therefore, confides to her his message, "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel."

Israel is the Church, the body of believers from Adam down to the last man. Old Israel had for citizens God's chosen people; and, because rejected by His own, Christ sought and found honor with the gentiles. He, therefore, constituted the nations a new Israel, and established His Church anew on laws of His own making. But in the new Israel as in the old, the test of salvation is the same, faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. "There is no other name under Heaven given to men whereby we must be saved." Ruina is the word used by Simeon to describe the utter destruction

of the Jews, and it is suggestive of that other passage where Christ is said to be the stone the builders rejected. Psalms, 117, 22. Acts, 4, 11. Without Christ for cornerstone their kingdom collapsed, much as a building reduced to ruins by an earthquake. And in the new Israel the divinity of Christ is keystone in the arch of religion. Unsettle this stone in the edifice of religion, and the whole structure falls, to bury offenders in death and disaster. Men are dashing their lives out against the rock of unbelief, and the Child in whom they refuse to recognize God is set for their fall, and as irrevocably set as He was for the Scribes and Pharisees of old Jerusalem.

Simeon continues, "This Child shall be set for a sign to be contradicted," a target for the arrows of conflictive opinions, a standard destined to divide the world in two, the camp of Christ and the camp of Lucifer. His whole life is to be an enigma to His very neighbors. Some will think Him Moses, some Elias, some the Baptist. Peter and the rest will hail Him Christ, the Son of the living God. His bitterest foes will denounce Him as an impostor, a seducer, a common drunkard, a fomentor of sedition, a person possessed by the devil. His death on the cross between two thieves will be a towering heap of contradictions. God will be confounded with robbers, innocence with guilt, omnipotence with weakness, divinity with the outcast dregs of humanity. And these exasperating contradictions are the sword, rending the soul of Mary that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. The abusive words hurled at Christ on Calvary, the

awful wounds inflicted on His sacred body, made His Mother a martyr in the most poignant and most pitiful sense of the term. During His three years with the multitude His enemies concealed their rancorous hate from fear of the people; but Good Friday witnessed an outburst of passion unparalleled in history. Their hearts lay open as the pages of a printed book, and the revelation was accomplished at the expense of Mary's sorrow.

V

THE THREE VOWS

"I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of all His people." Psalms, 115, 18.

WE renew our vows under the auspices of our Immaculate Mother, next to her divine Son the most conspicuous model of poverty, chastity and obedience history knows. In the words of St. Ignatius this renewal of vows is meant to increase our devotion, awaken memory of our solemn obligations, and strengthen us in our vocation. Devotion means consecration, it means a holocaust, a whole burnt offering, a sacrifice wherein no part of the victim is reserved for the use of the priest, but everything is reduced to cinders and ashes to acknowledge God's full and complete ownership or dominion. And we have a mean way of pilfering from the gifts we make Almighty God, and our generosity in the service of God is never so large that it cannot be made a little larger. Our memory is a treacherous friend, it weakens with long use; and the vivid impressions of fervor awakened in the soul that summer morning we first said our vows falls faint and dim with the lapse of years. We are not now the heroes and heroines of God we used to be, our enthusiasm has cooled a whole lot since the day we left home for the convent, and contact with the casualties of

life in religion has weakened our forces and very appreciably cut down our supply of strength. Heroism when viewed from afar, heroism when somebody else is the hero, is alluring, inspiring and grand, a theme for poetry, parent to thoughts as high as Heaven and higher. But heroism when close against us, when we are ourselves the heroes, wears an altogether different aspect. It is a school for hard knocks, it is repellent, a prod to discomfort, mighty common, no poetry, but all prose, as dull and dead as the obituary notices in the morning paper. Therefore, we need the help of renovation to bolster up our devotion, to sharpen our memory, and to solidify our vocation.

If life in religion has lost some of its lustre in our eyes, we can restore it to its original splendor by recalling in what high esteem it is held by saints and scholars in the Church. Our three vows constitute the essence of life in religion. Without vows monks and nuns are impossible; and St. Thomas identifies holiness with poverty, chastity and obedience, because they remove from one's pathway the three great obstacles to progress, rid the heart of three consuming cares, and, stripping man naked of every created good, nail him to the cross in sacrifice. The three concupiscences, greed of wealth, greed of pleasure and greed of glory are barriers between men and Heaven; and in the case of the wicked they are never crossed. Money is a care, pleasure is another, and worldly honor is the reward of eternal and sleepless vigilance. Wealth, pleasure, glory are all that the world can promise, and, because the vows make them impossible, the religious is a pau-

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per in life, and is, therefore, constrained to fasten his hopes on Heaven. Every deed we perform, because touched by our vows, is by the very fact an act of religion, whole worlds different from the acts of virtue posited by men and women independent of vows. Fidelity to vow doubles our merit, just as infidelity doubles our shame. Our vows are incompatible with sin, and, tying us to virtue by a second moral bond, make sin more of an impossibility. Others are tied to virtue by a single moral bond, we are tied by two; and in our vows we impose this second bond on ourselves with full freedom, and so make voluntary surrender of a species of freedom these others retain. While others bestow on God the fruit of the tree, we make offering of the tree and fruit alike. While others are content to allow God use-ownership in their acts, retaining always dominion over self, we add to their gift proprietorship in our very person. In others God has the right of a mere tenant; in His religious He has all the rights of owner, lord, and proprietor.

Vows strengthen the will in a way no other force save grace can boast. Holy writers with reason ascribe to vows the efficacy of Baptism in the matter of washing away previous sins, they cancel every prior promise of good works like pilgrimages, fasts and prayers, and rank in God's esteem with martyrdom. They vest patrons with the liberty of the children of God, kill solicitude from the soul, set men and women in a paradise apart from the contagion of sin, proclaim them officers in the Lord Christ's army, and house-servants in the Kingdom of God. A seat near the King is

enough, and every religious ought to always and everywhere feel as the queen of Sheba felt in the presence of Solomon. One old writer hesitates whether to call nuns heavenly women or earthly angels, women mercifully transplanted to the company of the elect, or angels away from home on a temporary leave of absence, to lend the comfort of their presence and the light of their example to the children of men. The three vows of religion invest men and women with this surpassing dignity, and, when we enter religion, we solemnly pledge ourselves to their observance. Poverty, therefore, and chastity, and obedience are a new burden we assume; and by the mercy of God we want to be poor, and pure, and docile in a conspicuous way to the end of the story. We want first and foremost to avoid all mortal sin in the matter of our vows, and then by the grace of God keep clear of lesser offenses and imperfections. Vows are seriously violated only when mortal sin is incurred; and, while it would be harsh and wrong to confound serious infractions of the vows with lighter transgressions, we must, in virtue of our consecration to high ideals, cultivate a supreme abhorrence for the slightest suspicion of sin.

Poverty in a very few words means the complete and entire surrender of proprietorship in material goods; it means to leave all, like Peter, for Christ; it means to use nothing as one's own, to take nothing, give nothing on one's own initiative, but always with dependence on the will of another, and that other is our superior. To constitute a mortal sin against poverty, the amount used, taken, or given without permission, must be of a

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size to make theft a mortal sin against the seventh commandment. The superior's permission saves every transaction of the sort from all suspicion of serious sin. Nobody, therefore, on the score of his vow need scruple using, taking or giving anything, of whatever value, when armed with the superior's permission. And yet the spirit of poverty has claims on our loyalty as well as the vow, and it would be highly wrong to indulge in any way a greedy longing for material goods, or manifest the same by too great frequency in asking permissions or seeking exceptions. All the trouble in this matter of poverty hinges on the superior's permission. When the superior is approached on the subject, and permission is clearly and explicitly given, there can be no doubt or difficulty whatever. Theologians besides recognize the validity of what they call presumed and tacit permissions; and human nature is very apt to go astray in their application. Presumed permission, as opposed to tacit, is supposed permission, and it avails to excuse from serious sin, when approach to the superior is impossible or extremely difficult. When opportunity to see the superior offers, and when the rule requires it, every presumed permission ought to be changed to explicit and express. A tacit permission is neither express nor presumed, but gathered from usual conduct of the superior; and, unless the superior puts herself on record as opposed to any such interpretation of her wishes, tacit permission is regularly considered valid. In some communities monthly permissions are given, and they cover smaller transactions in the way of using, taking and giving.

And here a multitude of questions suggest themselves for solution. With the aid of the broad principles just explained, everybody ought to be able to settle ordinary difficulties for herself. By way of practical advice, we are never going to be really and truly poor, unless we stick close to our rules. They are an explanation of the way our particular congregation wants the vow of poverty kept. The less we have to do with presumed and tacit permission the better. The less often we use, take and give things even with express permission the better. We are seldom or never without the necessities of life, and life's luxuries belong not to the poor of Christ, but to the rich and the wealthy of Lucifer's camp. Our rules on poverty may seem awfully tight, they forbid what appear to be trifles; but poverty is the wall of religion, and nothing is so quick to reduce a wall to ruins as a hole here and a hole there, a crack or a break anywhere along its entire length. Our rules on poverty tend at times to make the virtue repulsive, ugly, harsh to human nature; they talk of worn and patched clothes, severely plain furniture, dimly empty cells, hunger even and thirst; but poverty is our mother, and, like the little child of story, we must run to our mother in spite of her ragged and torn garments; we must keep close to her side, and flee the embraces of nearby queens in all the splendor of silk, and purple, and fine linen.

Chastity is the complete and entire renunciation of sexual pleasures entirely legitimate in marriage, and a second seal against illicit delights already forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments. In spite of the

praises heaped by spiritual writers on poverty and obedience, the second vow is with ordinary mortals the real and genuine test of generosity in the service of God. Poverty is at times annoying, but religion as a rule is an indulgent mother, and with a common-sense superior in command, all the demands of poverty can be met and satisfied with a small measure of heroism. At most it calls for the sacrifice of external goods, and they never sit so close to the heart as bodily pleasure. Obedience at times points us ways we should much prefer to avoid, but occasions of the kind are rare enough in religion, and oftener than not our wishes easily fall into line with those of our superiors. And, even when our wills are crossed, and our inclinations are trampled, reason and faith soothe the pain with the reflection that we are in the hands of a fond Father, and that our interests are safest in His care. But chastity knows no relief of any kind. No superior can sanction with permission the slightest indulgence; and chastity always and everywhere compels us to hate what half our nature loves. Theft is folly, whether done in religion or out of religion, and every violation of poverty is a species of theft. Disobedience to constituted authority is folly, whether done in religion or out of religion; and every violation of obedience is a deed of the kind. But sexual pleasure is not always and everywhere wrong; it is wrong in the single only. In marriage it is quite legitimate, and marriage makes abundant provision for its gratification. It is no folly out of religion, because marriage is honorable and in strict accord with the dignity of man and woman. It is no

folly, because God annexes it as a reward to men and women willing to coöperate with Him in the propagation of the race. Chastity is heroism of the supremest type, because it involves denial of a most persistent inclination, of an inclination altogether virtuous in marriage, and stamped there with the seal of God's approval.

Chastity, therefore, in a very few words means the complete and entire renunciation of all right to the indulgence of sexual pleasure; it means no marriage, and none of the delights that make marriage attractive; it means the set resolve and solemn promise to have absolutely nothing to do with thoughts, desires, words or deeds calculated to stir sexual emotions. Any mortal sin against the sixth or ninth commandment is a mortal sin against the vow. And purity is a most tender, a most delicate virtue. In this respect it surpasses poverty and obedience. They admit of what theologians call smallness of matter. In poverty the small amount involved can render the sin venial; in obedience the nature of the command disregarded can render the transgression venial. But in purity, as regards the matter, nothing is venial, everything is mortal. There is no smallness of matter with regard to sins against purity, and nothing but want of deliberation, want of full knowledge and consent can excuse the soul from the guilt of mortal sin.

And here again a multitude of questions offer themselves for solution. But we prefer not to enter into details. Enough to remark that the thoughts, desires, words and deeds opposed to chastity have always a direct bearing on sexual pleasure; and sexual pleasure

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manifests itself in so plain a way that it is a mystery to nobody. The pleasure attached to eating and drinking is not sexual pleasure. The pleasure provoked by a charming prospect or painting, a pretty face, a graceful figure; the joy derived from a concert or play; the feeling that springs from touch of a soft or smooth object, are not sexual pleasure; though they lead up to it by quick stages, and easily prove incentives to passion. The love a friend bears a friend is not sexual pleasure, though nothing perhaps so rapidly degenerates to wrong. The senses are right close to sexual pleasure, and of all five, sight and touch are the most dangerous. Modesty is the remedy, and we know our duty towards this lovely virtue. Our eyes and our hands are a constant menace to purity, and they must be kept in tight control. And we have rules on the subject. Strict custody of the eyes, undying fidelity to the rule of touch can save us a lot of trouble and spare us a world of shame and reproach. An ill-timed glance drove David to adultery and murder, cost him years of bitter tears, and changed the tune of the psalms from gay to sad, from exultation to sorrow. We must walk with care in the unseen presence of God; we must treat our own body and the bodies of others with the reverence due temples of the Holy Ghost, consecrated vessels of the altar. We carry our treasures in frail vessels, and we must not stumble, we must not expose ourselves to unnecessary danger. By way of encouragement the prospect of future reward is alluring; and our ears must never be empty of that song God's virgins sing in Heaven, marching past

their Captain's tent with palms in hand and crowned.

Obedience is our third vow, and it means entire readiness to do always the will of a superior, to live at the beck and call of another, to see God in authority, to have no mind or will of our own, but think and wish with the mind and will of another. St. Thomas summarizes the excellence of this third vow in the triple circumstance that it surrenders to God man's most precious possession, his will or liberty of action, that it virtually contains the sacrifice implied in the other two vows of poverty and chastity, and that it unites with God man's highest and chiefest moral faculty, his will. It is of vital importance to individual religious, and to the congregation to which they belong it is of essential necessity. The religious determined to do his own will were better in the world, because in that case he would hurt himself alone, and would work no harm to his brothers in the monastery. Religious work best in concert, and there can be no concerted action where the members are separated from the head. Authority is as much part of society as reason is of the man, it is of society's essence; and no organization or corporate body of men or women can long endure without complete submission on the part of its members to the person in command. This obedience admits of degrees. In order of merit they are obedience of execution, of will and of judgment. The first or lowest degree demands simple performance of the superior's wishes, no matter what repugnance of will the subject experiences and encourages, no matter how set and fixed he perseveres in his refusal to see the justice or fairness in the

superior's order. This first degree of obedience secures the integrity of the vow, and, though far removed from perfection, saves the vow from serious or mortal harm. It is all external, all on the outside, while the subject's will and mind continue in open conflict with the will and mind of the superior. Servants in the world pay this kind of obedience to their employers, and, though better than out and out disobedience, it is altogether unworthy of religious, of men and women consecrated heart and soul to the service of God. The second degree or obedience of will demands along with the performance of the superior's wishes that healthy spirit of coöperation which sinks private preferences, disregards personal likes and dislikes, and is glad to substitute the superior for self. The third degree or obedience of judgment adds to execution and agreement of will entire agreement with the superior's mind or judgment. In this case the subject uses every artifice to see things as the superior sees them, to banish whatever arguments favor a contrary view, and encourage every reason calculated to weaken his own and lend weight to the superior's opinion. An offense against the vow of obedience is a mortal sin only when an open violation of some express order solemnly and formally promulgated in virtue of holy obedience. For this reason most of our faults against obedience are slight transgressions and of venial malice. And yet we must aim at the highest, and in this business of obedience we must condemn and reproach ourselves, till our wills and minds as well as our hands are in exact agreement with those of our superior.

VI

THE THREE VOWS

"And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh." St. Matthew, 2, 11.

CHRISTMAS is always suggestive of the gifts made the new-born Child by the Magi, and I suppose the fact has something to do with the holiday presents in current vogue. We religious are spared all annoyance on this score by our vow of poverty. We have nothing not already given, and the most we can do in the gift line is to ratify anew the act whereby years ago we transferred to God all right to ownership, our body with all its pleasures, our soul with all its ambitions and aspirations. God must not be forgotten in this general distribution of favors, and, while our neighbors in the world are busy ministering to the comfort of God's images, we religious must gladden the heart of God Himself by pledging ourselves to greater fidelity in the discharge of our solemn obligations, and by taking effective measures to grow in fervor and generosity in His service. Christmas morning must find us on our knees before the manger with our hearts in our hands and our vows on our lips, ready and greedy to renew the big offering, with Jesus, Mary and Joseph for witnesses; with the Magi for models, and their gifts for reminders; with the shivering Child to encourage us

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towards poverty, with His maiden Mother to encourage us towards purity, and with our man of faith to encourage us towards obedience. With poverty, chastity and obedience for possessions, we are poor only in the eyes of the world. In the eyes of God we are rich beyond compare; and no king, whether from the East or the West, can outdo us in generosity. Our poverty is a species of gold vested with a purchasing power in the Kingdom of God, the one treasure of earth God Himself thought worth while appropriating. Our purity is a species of incense that smells sweet in the nostrils of God, the gift God brought down from Heaven to bestow on His Immaculate Mother. Our obedience is a species of myrrh, that loses none of its bitterness with the passage of years, that keeps us forever dead bodies in the hands of our superiors. It is with us always, even as it was with our Master all the way to death on the cross. Our vows then are the gold, the frankincense and the myrrh we lay at the feet of the new-born Babe Christmas morning; and we must pray Him for the strength needed to rise up from the offering as ready for the year's work as the Magi were to return to their several homes, past the lies of Herod, and the dangers of Jerusalem, and the journey's discomfort, with a mission to preach salvation to their peoples, and carry the good tidings to the uttermost ends of the earth. We must rise up from our offering new men and new women crucified to the world, men and women to whom the world itself is crucified. And we are not going to be men and women crucified to the world, unless we are as much marvels

of virtue to the world as Christ hanging on His cross, unless we are Christ's, having crucified our flesh with its vices and concupiscences.

This crucifixion in the eyes of the world means, to my mind, a sublimity of virtue bordering on the divine. Our vows make us religious as the commandments make us Christians, and, therefore, as religious crucified to the world we ought to be followers of Christ in poverty, purity and obedience of such sort that our compliance with our vows fills men of the world with admiration and wonder. Here is a wide field for reflection, stretching all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the manger to the cross. Our vows make us religious. They are the three nails that tie our hands and feet to the hard wood of the cross, and hold us up for the pity or scorn of a world that cannot or will not understand. They are the nails that years ago, when younger and fuller of enthusiasm, we lovingly kissed and bade crush through our flesh; nails that have repeatedly hurt since, and shall continue to hurt till our Good Friday comes, till we go out in the darkness with Christ. Our vows make us victims. Has there been any rapine in the holocaust? Have we at any time during the dead year listened to the cry of the mocking Jews, and come down from the cross to steal a few hours respite from our pains? Have we stolen from poverty, to enjoy little comforts forbidden by rule? Have we stolen from purity, to indulge wrong thoughts, to flatter dangerous curiosity, to encourage affection current among lovers? Have we stolen from obedience, to walk the easy ways of sloth, to slip the hardships of

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rule, to murmur and rebel in our heart against the prescriptions of authority?

Wealth after all is an affliction to God's sons only because it paves a smooth way to ease, pleasure and honor. In the world money has no uses beyond the securing of these three curses, clothed in the disguise of blessings. Your present business, then, in the matter of poverty is to institute a holy warfare against ease, pleasure and honor. You must stir yourselves up with a stick, and keep yourselves like slaves to the dogged task of familiarity with unease and discomfort. You must accustom yourselves to the absence of luxuries, and acquire a species of hardness proof against the seductions ahead. Money cannot buy honor among us, but a religious is not many months old, before he discovers that money has its counterpart in diverse schemes and methods, and political practices, familiar to all. We must countenance no such petty frauds, we must busy ourselves in securing last place, and cordially welcome humiliation, when it happens our way. We are at war with the world. We are in a city apart from the enemies of God, and poverty is the wall of separation. It is a high and strong wall, and we must by vigilance prevent the enemy from removing or even touching a stone in it. There must be no holes in it. The vicissitudes of time and temptation must work in it no trace of wear or weakness. Poverty is our mother; and, when her hand is heavy on us, we must kiss it with affection. We must be greedy for opportunities to show loyalty to our mother. Like ingenuous children we must be consumed with fear, when

poverty is not within calling distance; and, when close up to her side, we must put on the courage of lions. When she denies us some trifle that our blindness magnifies, we must swallow our sorrow in silence, and do homage to her prudence. She furnishes us with everything necessary and convenient; she withholds in her wisdom only such gifts as are calculated to do us harm.

About our second vow much need not be said. Only the almighty grace of God can make men and women chaste. Purity makes frequent calls on our heroism, and the powers of hell are thoroughly well acquainted with the abiding pertinacity of this passion in our members. Here, perhaps, more than elsewhere is that ancient saying true, holiness is a habit. Chastity is an uncertain possession till grace kills nature, and stamps out all predilection for the opposite vice. Scattered acts of the virtue afford small security against future loss, unless the heart is possessed of a habitual disposition, an abiding prejudice in favor of virgin thoughts and virgin deeds. This habit of purity is the free gift of God, and the heart must of necessity be a prey to anxiety till God grants the gift. Hence the wisdom of making it the burden of our prayers. Chastity is a creature of Heaven, and beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals. It is native to the angels, and was unknown in the world till Christ and His Virgin Mother introduced it. We must endeavor to imitate angelical purity in cleanness of both mind and body. There's the standard, the purity of the angels. It is a high standard; it would be an impossible standard, if we had only degraded nature

to lean upon. But God's grace can work the miracle; and grace's omnipotence is ours, if we do our half of the work. We must keep our rules regarding custody of the senses. These senses are the five gateways of the soul, and, if they are sealed against dangerous impressions, cleanness of mind becomes a happy necessity.

Our third vow has without doubt suffered blemishes during the dead year. No serious fault, perhaps, has threatened its integrity, but a thousand little negligences are apt even in this house of prayer to dim its lustre. Human weakness asserts itself here as elsewhere, and close examination must reveal matter for reproach and correction. We may be drifting into lazy carelessness with regard to answering bells. We may be frittering away time in the indulgence of easy sloth, when we should be employing with a jealous activity every single moment allotted by obedience to this or that hard duty. We may be weakening in that spirit of faith, which prompts religious to see in the orders of superiors commands fresh from the lips of Almighty God. Our hearts may not have always been in our work, as they would be if our obedience were up to the standard, if we saw God in authority. We are at school, and lifelong obedience can be made an easy and pleasant task by accustoming ourselves from the start to take a proper view of things. We may on occasions forget the existence of such and such a rule, we may under stress of temptation act against our better knowledge; but loyalty to the training we get must save us from open breaches of obedience in impor-

tant crises, and, this point secured, we are a long remove from danger. But this point is secured only at the expense of scrupulous exactness all through our early years. Obedience is seriously hurt by complaints and fault finding. We cannot even foster within ourselves repugnance to any single prescription of superiors or rule without doing obedience heavy damage.

And we must not be content with discovering and bewailing our faults against the vows. That would be to turn Christmas into a dreary season of sadness, and altogether defeat God's purpose. A lot of time is wasted in useless regrets; and we are stealing from opportunity when not busy with the passing hour, or laying plans for future improvement. We must, therefore, derive no discouragement from past failures, we must be intent on present good, and must often animate ourselves to meet the problems of the coming year with courage and enthusiasm. No matter how distressing the past, it hides its own measure of good will and merit; and all the future is roseate with hope, unless we want to be confirmed and chronic pessimists. The future is our land of promise, flowing with the milk and honey of encouragement; and trust in God is our pillar of cloud by day, and our pillar of fire by night. No good can come of making our burdens seem heavier than they are. If we must exaggerate, let us exaggerate in our own favor, and let us dwell by preference on the bliss attaching to our condition, neglecting its woes. Let us like laborers in the sunny South whistle as we work, and forget the day's oppressive heat in

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melody and song. Even the burden of life in religion is light, and the yoke of our vows is sweet. Poverty, chastity and obedience mean the absolute surrender of wealth, and pleasure, and honor; and in the realms of faith wealth, and pleasure, and honor are empty trifles.

VII

THE VOWS

“For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.” I St. John, 2, 16.

To enter the convent means to leave the world for the purpose of securing entire and permanent consecration to the service of God by the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in an approved religious order or congregation. The world, according to St. John, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, I St. John, 2, 16; and our vows mean the abandonment of all three. Poverty means an eternal farewell to the concupiscence of the eyes or wealth; chastity means death to the concupiscence of the flesh, or bodily pleasure; and obedience kills the pride of life, or worldly ambition, by putting all our future at the mercy of a superior. We leave the world, when we abandon money, pleasure and ambition; and our vows accomplish this result in the neatest conceivable way.

Two masters contend for our service, God and the world. Outside of religion men and women go into two classes. Some serve the world alone, and acknowledge no other master. These men and women are sinners, slaves to passion; misers, with an eye to wealth

only; libertines, with an eye to pleasure alone; and demagogues, actuated by motives of worldly glory. They seldom or never take thought of God, or virtue, or religion; they trample under foot every divine and human law to accomplish their base purposes, and it is appalling to think that they constitute the vast bulk of mankind. Some others try to effect a compromise between God and the world in face of Christ's solemn declaration, "You cannot serve God and Mammon." These men and women are ordinary, every-day Christians, ordinary, every-day Catholics, and they are not in every case sinners; but their lives are one prolonged struggle between vice and virtue, between love of God and love of the devil; and, if they compass salvation, the blessing is due in a large part to the abundant and forgiving mercy of God. They are obliged by their very state or condition in life to make money, to seek pleasure, and work toward honor; and, though purity of intention can make all three pursuits quite blameless, it cannot rid them of danger, it cannot free their patrons from the reproach of serving the world to the extent of devoting some of their energies to wealth, pleasure and worldly glory. Out in the world the man or the woman, who accumulates money with a view singly and solely to God's glory, is a rare bird; the man or the woman, who dances, goes to the play, eats, drinks and makes merry for the sole purpose of making God better known and better loved by His creatures, is even a rarer bird; and rarest of all is the man or woman, who contrives to keep in close touch with God, when campaigning for offices regularly parcelled out by

God's enemies. There are saints in the world, religion enjoys no monopoly in this line; but saints in the world are like all wonders, few and far between; and of this we can be certain, they are not giving God all the glory they could give Him in religion. Their hearts are divided, God is not their single love, and in that incessant strife between God and the world for mastery in their affections, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the world on occasions wins. But in religion everything is different, everything ought to be different. The world is left at the door of the convent, left on the outside, and God the All-beautiful is single Master inside its sacred precincts. To enter the convent means to leave the world for the purpose of securing entire and permanent consecration to the service of God. In religion we have no master to serve but Almighty God. We owe and do no allegiance to wealth, or pleasure, or ambition; we have no money to make or spend, no delight of body to enjoy, no mind or will of our own, with which to plot and plan for honors. And just as it is hard to be poor, pure and humble in a world of the three concupiscences of life, it is easy to be poor with the poor, chaste with the chaste, and humble with the humble, the exact condition of affairs in religion; and, if holiness dwells anywhere on earth, its most congenial abode, its home by preference ought to be the monastery, the convent, the cloister.

Our vows emancipate us from the slavery of the world to make us servants and sons of God exclusively, they divorce us from all outside cares, and life's single purpose in religion is to do the good pleasure of God.

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We can hardly exaggerate the value of our vows, and they are the one feature that renders a religious vocation the rare treasure it is. This being the case, it is well worth our while to study the nature of our vows to its very depths, with a view to growth in appreciation of the tremendous favor done us when God whispered us conventward. Years ago thought of the sublime life awaiting us in religion inspired us with all the courage needed to sacrifice the world and its concupiscences. Time and contact with the vicissitudes, inseparable from life everywhere outside of Heaven, may have dimmed our eyes to the splendor of our vocation, and reduced it to the level of youth-time's forgotten ideals. Renewal of acquaintance with the spirited emotions that drove us to the lengths of heroism when younger, may possibly compel us, when older and no heroes, to stand to duty, and acquit ourselves right manfully of the obligations we assumed when we left the world to consecrate ourselves entirely and forever to the service of God. It may prove a help to reflect on the surpassing excellence of our vows, and the supreme advantages attaching to their strict observance.

A vow is a promise made to God, and, because our promises borrow dignity from the persons to whom they are made, no conceivable promise can surpass a vow in point of excellence. Nobody is nobler than God, and, of all the promises we know, a vow is the most excellent. Marriage-vows are promises between husband and wife; and no doubt they get their name from the resemblance they bear promises made to God. The wife, in her husband's eyes, is a paragon of perfec-

tion; and, if not the most perfect type of woman in all the world, is at least the best that fortune threw in his way. And the wife feels persuaded that her husband measures up to the same high degree of perfection. Husband and wife are on occasions trapped into mistake by love, and, before the marriage is a month old, wake up to the fact that they made their promises not to paragons of perfection, but to very ordinary specimens of humanity. Religious experience no such disappointment, and the older we grow in religion, the tighter becomes the conviction that God is worth all the trust we reposed in Him, and that His nearer company is recompense for all the sacrifices we made in His honor.

The will is by common consent the highest of our faculties, sovereign mistress of the others; and, because the will has more to do with a vow than with any other promise of which we are capable, a vow surpasses whatsoever other promise in dignity and grandeur. When we hear Mass on Sunday, abstain from meat on Friday, when we perform any good work, we use our will, and use it with full freedom; but always with a sense of moral obligation, always with the feeling that it would be wrong and dangerous to omit the good work. When we promise poverty, chastity and obedience to God, we are conscious of a fuller measure of freedom. We are under no moral obligation to enter religion, we could stay in the world without wrong or danger; and, therefore, entrance into the convent means more freedom than the observance of Sunday, or the keeping of Friday. The vows are counsels, not

commandments. Counsels bind only such as freely elect to follow them; commandments bind the world at large, and, whether men keep them or not, the obligation to keep them always stands.

Besides, a vow is an act of religion, because God is the person in whose favor the promise is made; and among all the moral virtues religion is the most excellent. Religion itself is the acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion or ownership. Worship is the manifestation of religion. Sacrifice is worship's highest tribute, and for this reason there can be no true religion without sacrifice. Sacrifice means the death or destruction of a victim; and, if life knows any completer sacrifice than that involved in the three vows of religion, we are not aware of its whereabouts. Martyrdom perhaps would be a greater sacrifice; but martyrdom is not in our power. Martyrs are impossible without persecutors of a kind with the Roman Emperors, and Neros are fewer now than they used to be, and the few that remain are restrained from excessive cruelty by salutary fear of its consequences. And, as a matter of fact, life in religion is a more dreadful prospect than martyrdom itself. The martyr dies, and quits everything, the sorrows of life along with its joys. The religious quits whatever joy life possesses, to be burdened with its sorrows till death. From a natural point of view, life is less a blessing than death, when life is without money, without pleasure, without freedom to do, think and wish as we please. Every act of worship is an act of religion, but a vow is the single act of religion that constitutes men and women reli-

gious; and the circumstance is another tribute to the excellence of vows. Hence, again, to enter the convent, is to leave the world, to become a religious, for the purpose of securing entire and permanent consecration to the service of God.

Virginity without a vow is very different from virginity with a vow. The first is one, the second is two virtues; and in the eyes of God the vow is more precious than the virginity. Vows, therefore, are the heart and soul of the religious life, and in religion man comes closest to giving God all that belongs to Him, and thus hits nearest to the full requirements of strict justice. We can never give God His whole due, but in the three vows we give Him whatever good the world contains, we give Him the substance of all possible wishes, life's three concupiscences; and nobody can give God more. The pleasure God derives from men's three vows is another measure of their dignity. We can make no fuller acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion than lay at His feet whatever the world holds most dear, and the vows are just such generosity. The vows are three nails tying us for life to the cross, and these nails hurt till our bodies are carried out to the graveyard for burial. If the good thief won Heaven at the cost of three hours on the cross in company with Christ, a new Heaven ought to be made for the men and women, who submit to the same or even greater pain for a lifetime. There are 24 hours in every day, there are 365 days in every year; and some religious live to see their Golden Jubilee.

Our vows are a holocaust, a whole burnt offering,

wherein no portion of the victim, however small, is saved for the use of the officiating priest. Devout men and women in the world give God the fruits of the tree, without ever yielding up ownership of the tree itself. In the monastery and the convent men and women generously give God the tree as well as its fruits; their bodies with all the pleasures they can enjoy, their souls with all the thoughts and wishes they can elicit. No surrender is completer, none freer from conditions. The vows mean a generous renunciation of wealth, and pleasure, and honor; they are a plain, straightforward promise to be poor, and chaste, and obedient everywhere, at all times, and in all things. Their observance calls for virtue of a heroic type, and demands as close imitation of the Master as human nature can ambition, making religious as much marvels of virtue in the eyes of the world as Christ hanging on the cross.

And now a word about the advantages attaching to vows. They strengthen the will in good, and every new accession of strength to the will, no matter how procured, is a distinct gain. The irrevocable nature of our vows, their sweeping efficacy, the lofty attributes of the divine personage, to whom they are made, all combine to make our vows stout chains, binding us tight and fast to virtue and holiness. The firmer the tree in the ground, the faster the vine holds to its supports, the more fruit they bear; and vows fix the will in good, our three vows are three nails fastening us to virtue as well as to the cross of Christ. We never forfeit our free will in religion, we simply use it aright. The practice

of virtue is as much an exercise of freedom as the commission of sin. The necessity imposed upon us by vow is self-imposed, and necessity of that kind is compatible with freedom. God is wholly unable to do wrong, and His freedom, like His other attributes, is infinite. The elect in Heaven cannot offend God, and nobody on earth is freer than they. Necessity toward good is infinitely better than freedom toward evil, and religious are full of the thought, when they take vows. The elect in Heaven are confirmed in good, outside the reach of temptation; and religious, because their vows make temptation more and more impossible, are striving toward the blessed condition of saints in Heaven. You cannot strengthen yourself without weakening the forces of your enemy, and the vows accomplish this double result. Our vows put us right close to God, and the closer we get to God, the more we share in His bounty. Our vows dedicate and consecrate us to God, our vows make us children and heirs to God; and no genuine father forgets his children and heirs when it comes time to distribute his wealth. God loves them that love Him, our love for God is the measure of His love for us; and certainly life under vow betrays more affection for God than life without vow.

VIII

POVERTY

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” St. Matthew, 5, 3.

To enter the convent means to leave the world for the purpose of securing entire and permanent consecration to the service of God by the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in an approved religious order or congregation. In the convent we have no master to serve but Almighty God, we owe and do no allegiance to the world or its three concupiscences, wealth, pleasure and ambition. Our vows make us real and true religious; and, while every act of worship is an act of religion, a vow is the single act of religion that constitutes men and women religious. A contemplative is not the man who now and then meditates, but the man whose life is one long meditation. And in much the same way a religious is not the man who at scattered intervals performs acts of religion, but the man who lives religion, in such sort that all his energies are dedicated and consecrated to the service of God, a condition of affairs verified in a life under vow alone. It would be presumption on our part to attempt to settle which of the three vows is the most important. St. Ignatius was a great student of human nature, and in his *Spiritual Exercises*, where study

failed him, we reverently believe that God's Holy Spirit miraculously came to his assistance, and suggested wisdom beyond his unaided power. It might, therefore, prove a help in the solution of this question regarding the comparative superiority of the three vows, to reflect that St. Ignatius in his contemplation on the Two Standards virtually accords first place to poverty. Poverty attacks wealth, and in the subjugation of a soul to his service the devil's first move is towards money. Then in quick succession he drives his prospective victim to greed of glory and love of pleasure. Money is first requisite. Glory and pleasure are at money's service, and without money they are difficult of attainment or even impossible. Pleasure closes the process, because by very nature it unfits men for strenuous endeavor, while wealth and fame are won only at the expense of untiring effort. Of course, some misers are content to gape at their money-bags till death, without dreaming of countries beyond. And Lucifer, exercising a prudent economy in his exertions, never urges them forward. But these men are monstrosities of nature. Most sinners are wide awake to the fact that money has ulterior uses, that it is desirable only inasmuch as it can purchase mental and bodily delights. Therefore, they press on in pursuit of fame; and, when once glory is compassed, nothing remains to be done but sit idly down to the enjoyment of brutish pleasure, and await death like beasts of the field. Poverty attacks wealth, chastity attacks pleasure, obedience attacks pride or ambition; and, because money is the sinews of war for the enemy, be-

cause money is the readiest means available for pleasure and honor, we can save ourselves the trouble of attacking pleasure and honor by cutting off the enemy's resources, by depriving ourselves in poverty of the one indispensable means for the indulgence of pleasure and the acquisition of honor. St. Ambrose somewhere calls poverty the first virtue and mother to all the others; and somewhat the same thought must have been uppermost in his mind, when he made the statement. Pagan philosophers, when minded to seriously cultivate wisdom and virtue, began operations by drowning their wealth in the depths of the sea. When advising the young man in the Gospel towards perfection, the Lord Christ gives all His attention to poverty, with never a word about chastity or obedience. "Go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor." St. Matthew, 19, 21. With poverty in all its ramifications secure, chastity and obedience will take care of themselves. And our vow strips us of wealth in a most absolute way. It leaves us not only without money, but without any chance to make money; and the fortune of many a millionaire was built on a nickel. The fathers of some of our richest citizens were picayune traders, and their sons never earned an honest penny in their lives. The laugh was not on St. Peter, when he reminded Christ that he had left all, and wanted to know what return he could expect. St. Matthew, 19, 27. Peter left more than his father's house, which may have been a fisherman's shanty. He left more than a boat and a net, one of which may have been as full of holes as the other. In surrender-

ing all that he had, he surrendered a world of possibilities.

But, after all, the place poverty holds in the Lord Christ's sermon on the Mount is, perhaps, highest tribute to its excellence. Nobody need be reminded that the sermon itself, running through three chapters of St. Matthew's gospel, opens with the eight beatitudes, and that the first of the eight is an exhortation to practise the virtue of poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Matthew, 5, 3. These beatitudes are eight steps in the ladder to God, the ladder itself is rectitude of conduct, and all the different virtues, from poverty to martyrdom, are steps or rungs in the ladder. To climb a ladder, the rungs must be taken in order. No rung can be skipped, and progress towards the second rung, the third and the others is impossible till the first rung is taken. Divine wisdom fixes the order, and when Christ gives first place in His sermon to poverty, He virtually serves notice on the world that perfection is impossible without poverty of spirit for preliminary. It is worth noting that He singles out poverty of spirit for the honor, without a word about poverty of fact or actual poverty. The rich as well as the poor are called to perfection; and, not to dishearten the rich, Christ intimates that actual poverty is no indispensable requisite for a place in the Kingdom. Poverty of spirit is the one indispensable requisite; and there is no denying that actual poverty is a greater help to poverty of spirit than actual wealth. It is tremendously easier for a pauper to be poor in spirit than it is

for a millionaire; and, if all wealth could be laid aside by everybody without detriment to others, Christ, perhaps, would have made actual poverty first step in the ladder to God. But actual poverty is as much an impossibility with some mortals as actual wealth is with others. Some men are born rich, some men acquire wealth later in life; and it may well happen to be the duty of both classes to hold on to their money, and manage their property as prudent stewards. They may be fathers of families with wives and children dependent on them for support. They may be sons and daughters with brothers and sisters to care for, and Christ wants us, as far as possible, to consult the comforts and the rights of others in our efforts towards perfection. Actual poverty is, therefore, a luxury denied some souls because of their peculiar situation in life. But poverty of spirit is within everybody's reach. It is more at home with want than with plenty, but nothing in the nature of plenty bars its residence in the heart. The eye of that needle Christ had in mind is always large enough for the camel, with space to spare. Otherwise salvation and damnation would not be questions of conduct, but of dollars and cents; and the amount of money disposed of in a man's will would settle his lot for eternity. Pretty generally things go that way, but the money is less to blame for the misfortune than its owner's stupid neglect to cultivate poverty of spirit.

In last analysis Christ's own example is history's loudest pronouncement in favor of poverty's excellence. Chastity and obedience in Christ provoke small or no

wonder. He was conceived and born without original sin, and it would be a species of horrid blasphemy to think Him tormented by that angel of Satan, that sting of the flesh, so pathetically commemorated by St. Paul, II Cor. 12, 7. Impurity is too vile a thing, too distinctively human to be associated with the divinity, and even manly men and womanly women in cooler moments scorn all commerce with its degradation. They may be surprised into faults against purity, but that is only another proof of what weak vessels men and women are. And in Christ, obedience to the will of His Father was part and parcel of His very nature. The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are one in substance and nature. A man never quarrels with himself; and the Son had even less chance to quarrel with the Father. Anarchy is impossible in Heaven, and in the Incarnation the Lord Christ became man and changed His residence without ceasing to be God, without forfeiting His place on the right hand of His Father. But poverty was different. Poverty is compatible with the divinity. In spite of what the world thinks to the contrary, it is no disgrace to be born poor, to live poor, to die poor. There is no poverty in Heaven, and the Son of God, enamoured of poverty's beauty, left Heaven and momentarily surrendered its joys to seek the jewel on earth. He lived with us three and thirty years, and He was never a minute out of poverty's company. His whole life was a long lesson in poverty, and it looks like waste of time and the unwelcome rehearsal of an old story to enter details. He was born in a stable, laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling

clothes. He held out His hands to the Magi as a beggar, and the gold they gave Him served to keep Him in life. He had a poor mother, His father was a carpenter, and, when it came time to choose friends, He singled out rude fishermen for the favor. His last three years He sealed to life in the open, without a roof to shelter Him, dependent on the uncertain charity of strangers for His meals. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay His head." St. Matthew, 8, 20. When minded to reward a host's generosity, He had to work a miracle, changing water into wine at Cana; when minded to rescue devoted followers from the pangs of hunger, He had to multiply the loaves and fishes in the wilderness. Peter paid his own and the Master's tribute with gold taken from the mouth of a fish. To enter Jerusalem in triumph, He had to levy on His supreme ownership of things and appropriate another's beast of burden. He kept His last Pasch on earth in the supper-room of a stranger. Forty pieces of silver might have bought off Judas, and averted the betrayal. He died naked, able to count four friends among thousands of His enemies. His sacred body was wrapped for burial in a winding sheet humanely lent by a casual friend, and was laid to rest in a tomb prepared for and owned by another. His poverty was of a heroic order, it was of the extremest type; and even His enemies are pretty generally agreed that He never made a mistake. The world refuses to follow Christ, the world walks another way. Somebody is wrong, God or the world; and, when choice is to be made

between the infinite wisdom of God and the night-time ignorance of an accursed world, men and women with clear heads, men and women in religion, know well where to stand. Men sometimes fall from great wealth to abject poverty, they oftener perhaps rise from abject poverty to colossal wealth; and the attitude of the world towards poverty and wealth can be gathered from its behavior in the two emergencies. A man fallen from wealth to poverty is beneath the world's notice, and passes quick as a wink to scorn, contempt and oblivion. A man risen from poverty to wealth has the world's eyes, all his neighbors sit up and take notice, every pen and every tongue in the land exult to advertise his good fortune. Somebody is wrong, God or the world; and without a fear we religious stand with God, we religious in the first of our three vows profess and do undying allegiance to this bride of Christ, this mistress of St. Francis and ours, sweet poverty. No created good can minister content to our troubled souls; and of all created goods money, perhaps, is least able to do the thing. It is folly to look for content this side of Heaven, unless we look for it in poverty. Poverty of spirit is twin-sister to content, because it kills desire in the soul; and the very next thing to possession of a good is to have no desire for it, no thought of it. In the words of Christ, the poor in spirit are blessed or happy, not precisely because Heaven awaits them as a reward, but because Heaven is already theirs.

The surpassing excellence of poverty must be plain from this brief study of its nature. The advantages

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attaching to poverty are another alluring incentive to its practice. Poverty expiates old sins, prevents new ones, and helps wonderfully to plant all other virtues in the soul. Penance is the readiest means at our disposal to atone for past offenses. Christ on the cross made abundant amends for the crimes of mankind; but He never meant to let the culprits off without a share in His sufferings and pains. That would be to encourage wickedness; and Christ came to spread virtue, not to promote vice. His Passion will avail us nothing, unless we shoulder our cross daily and walk all the way to Calvary in His company. In the words of St. Paul, we must fill up the measure of Christ's merits by the patient endurance of aches and ills in His service. Coloss. 1, 24. Penance means more than a change of heart, a firm purpose of amendment. It means sorrow, it means contrition, it means sacrifice; and sacrifice is the death or destruction of a victim. And nothing in all the world is more provocative of sorrow, and contrition, and sacrifice than poverty of spirit and consequent detachment from the goods of earth. Poverty means the complete and absolute surrender or sacrifice of all external goods, and leaves the man owner of nothing save his body and his soul. Chastity and obedience finish the work of renunciation; one claiming his body and its pleasures for victim; the other, his soul and its ambitions. Poverty, therefore, expiates old sins. It likewise prevents new ones, and helps wonderfully to plant all other virtues in the soul. With this thought in mind, St. Ignatius in his rules calls poverty a fortress or wall, and a mother. Behind poverty the

soul rests secure against danger; and in religion every fault against poverty is a new hole in the wall, through which soon or late some enemy will effect an entrance, to do disastrous havoc. Religious orders have gone to smash because of laxity in the matter of poverty. With poverty gone, chastity and obedience die easy deaths and quick. Poverty is poison to anything like pride or good conceit. You know without being told anew how the poor are affected towards pride. The proud affect fine clothes, and the poor are condemned to wear rags. The proud capture men's esteem by royal favors, by setting feasts of regal splendor; and the poor are empty handed, the poor must be content to eat their crust of bread, alone and in a dark corner. The proud parade before the public for applause, they have a passion for notice; the poor go down side-streets to escape attention, they shrink from passers-by, they hide away, conscious all day long of their degradation; and, when dragged into the light, reckon themselves made sport of, and would much prefer to stay hidden. And poverty is no more an enemy to pride than it is to all the other vices. Money is the root of all evil. Every conceivable crime grows on this tree. It can procure murder, it can break up families, it can ruin young and unsuspecting lives. The body is ready for viler pleasures, only when stuffed with rich food and exhilarating wine; and there is a very decided connection between robustness of body and passion. Passion is a fire; and hunger extinguishes the flame, allays the fever, and keeps the blood cool.

Poverty, therefore, is mother to all the virtues, just as money is mother to every crime. Poverty rids the mind of a world of cares, it does away with that annoying solicitude about the future, which makes the lives of the wealthy a perfect hell on earth. Regularly the beggar is solicitous about only one thing, where to procure his next meal; and there is enough charity left in the world to make him feel secure about that. With nothing in the world to desire, our hearts by a kind of instinct fasten on God and the things of God, and the poor are hopelessly stripped of opportunity to get ahead in the world. "We have not here a lasting city," beats like the music of a song on the tired ears of the poor; and there is nothing left for them to do but strive towards that other and better home, awaiting them beyond the cemetery. And God will not be wanting to men and women in the kingdom, become beggars for His sake. His goodness and justice preclude all chance of the thing. Voluntary paupers in His service will always have something to wear, and something to eat. They are birds in the nest, with God the mother-bird foraging land and sea in search of food for the fledglings. In the Gospel Christ promises them a hundred-fold in this life. Christ is God, and sooner shall the heavens fall than God's word fail. St. Matthew, 24, 35. The fulfilment of this splendid promise may sometimes escape our dull notice, but to doubt it is to doubt the word of God, and with the aid of a little arithmetic we can easily wake up to the situation. Where we had one home, we now have hundreds; and they are not miles apart. Where we had

one father and one mother, we now have hundreds, professing to bear us the same love, and making good their profession. Where we had a few brothers and sisters, we now have more than we can count. We have all the wealth of a big corporation at our disposal. We are as famous as the organization to which we belong. We are accounted as holy as its most heroic saints, as wise as its most erudite scholars. Our personal ignorance and mediocrity in virtue are swallowed up and forgotten in the mental and moral prestige of our brothers and sisters. The food we eat may be coarse, but it is prepared by fond and loving hands, and that spells a world of sweetness. In time of sickness angels of charity minister to our comfort; in old age we are not pushed aside and forgotten; and, when we die, a bell summons the whole house to our bedside to lend us their pity and pray for our departing soul.

IX

POVERTY IN PRACTICE

“Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come follow me.” St. Matthew, 19, 21.

WE are not yet done with the vows. Our whole purpose in prior talks on the subject was to set forth the surpassing excellence and supreme advantage of the three vows of religion. All their excellence lies in the quality of the sacrifices they imply, all their advantages are summed up in the help they afford souls to achieve holiness. Ordinarily no man or woman can make a greater sacrifice than that involved in poverty, chastity and obedience, because this sacrifice means the utter and entire abandonment of the world and of all the world holds dear, the three concupiscences of life, wealth, pleasure and honor; a holocaust, a whole-burnt-offering, making life in religion a species of crucifixion, descent into a tomb, a living martyrdom. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and our vows look wonderfully like helps suggested by Almighty God Himself for a fuller and completer observance of the ten commandments, bearing directly on five of them, indirectly on the others. Holiness is union of mind and heart with God. Union grows with the removal of distractions from our horizon, and the commonest and most annoying distractions the world

knows are wealth, pleasure and honor. We urged these and similar considerations, to awaken in souls a fondness and enthusiasm for holy vocation, and the determination to discharge with genuine gladness our solemn obligations as religious of God.

We wish now to descend to particulars, to pass from theory to practice, and mark specific faults against the vows. We begin with poverty. We must first carefully distinguish between the vow of poverty and the virtue of poverty. The vow forbids external or outward and visible acts of ownership or proprietorship, such as holding, keeping, taking, lending, borrowing, using, destroying material goods like land, money, food, clothing, and things of the kind. The virtue forbids, in addition to these external acts, greedy thoughts and greedy desires, with a bearing on acts forbidden by the vow. A sin against the vow is a sin against religion, a sin against the virtue is a sin against justice. Every sin against the vow of poverty is a sin against the virtue, not every sin against the virtue is a sin against the vow. Poverty destroys ownership, and ownership is of two kinds, direct and indirect. Direct touches the substance of a thing, indirect its use. Direct is proper and peculiar to the landlord, indirect is proper and peculiar to the tenant. A solemn vow of poverty does away with all ownership, direct and indirect, and a superior's permission avails nothing. A simple vow of poverty leaves direct ownership of property in hand at time of the vow, together with its revenues, of gifts by inheritance or will calling for no new act of acceptance, and of other presents re-

ceived with consent of superiors. It makes all indirect ownership sinful, and therefore forbids all use of material goods, without leave of the superior, whether these goods be owned before or acquired after the vow. In this business of poverty the permission of superiors is most important, inasmuch as it can make legitimate almost any transaction in ownership, excepting downright theft. This permission can be of at least five different kinds, express, tacit, presumed, general, particular. Two of them are perfectly safe, and admit no doubt. They are express and particular. The other three are equally safe, but admit of misunderstanding and mistake. Permission is express, when asked and given in plain terms. It is particular, when it bears on a set article with time, place and conditions clearly defined. It is tacit, when it is never asked or given in so many terms, but it is gathered from the uniform conduct and wishes of the superior. It is presumed, when it is used prior to the asking, always with the purpose and intention of asking afterwards, when opportunity offers. It is general, when included in some particular permission already asked and granted. When possible, it is safest of course, to always act with express and particular permission. On occasions circumstances make such permission impossible or difficult, and we must proceed with due caution. In the use of tacit permission, we must with the help of clear signs be morally sure of the superior's wishes; in the use of presumed permission, we must on some future occasion acquaint the superior with our conduct; and in the use of a general permission, we must

be quite sure that it extends to the matter in question.

Manuscripts and personal writings, when not viewed as salable articles, can be kept without permission and transferred to others. It is a sin against the vow to apply things to uses other than those prescribed by the superior, who has granted permission. It is reckoned a sin against the vow to receive money from an outsider to dispose of as one pleases, without regard to the wishes of the giver. It is reckoned no sin against the vow, though it can easily be a sin against prudence, to receive or even ask money from an outsider to be disposed of in the name of the giver, whether the giver designates the person or charity to be benefited or leaves its selection to the religious. Pure gifts can be refused without detriment to the vow, though such refusal can easily prove an unkindness to the monastery or convent. To refuse an offering due the house or already accepted by the house is a sin against the vow. To apply the goods of the house to wrong purposes, or to wantonly waste them without any permission from the superior, is plainly against the vow and a sin of theft. No superior can lawfully give such permission to subjects, and subjects knowingly using such a permission sin against the vow.

The gravity of a sin against the vow of poverty, its mortal or venial nature, is settled by the amount involved in the transaction against the vow. In general, what constitutes a mortal sin of theft, constitutes a mortal sin against the vow. It is, therefore, a sin against our vow of poverty to take anything from another without permission; to keep, to use, to destroy

or give anything to another; and the amount involved settles the gravity of the offense. When done with permission, all these several acts are quite legitimate and free from blame. To borrow and lend are likewise forbidden by the vow. To lend even to outsiders with certainty of recovery never amounts to mortal sin, and the sin is even smaller when the loan is made to somebody in community. Whether against the vow or not, to keep something in trust for another without permission, is certainly against the perfection of poverty, and nearly always against rule. After getting permission to give something to somebody in particular, it will not be against the vow, except in rare cases, to give it to another. Permission to give to another implies permission in the other to receive. In practical everyday life hundreds of other cases occur for solution, and they must all be settled in accordance with the principles just enunciated. But poverty in religion exacts more than the mere prescriptions of the vow. The vow of poverty is handmaid to the virtue of poverty; and to keep the vow without caring for the virtue, is to do only half the work imposed on us by religion. Life in religion means a constant endeavor towards the perfection of every virtue; and we are no true religious, unless we add to the observance of the vow steadfast and enthusiastic cultivation of the virtue. Poverty of spirit is the perfection of the virtue, actual poverty is the purpose of the vow; and we made the vow only because actual poverty makes poverty of spirit easier and surer. The vow consecrates us to actual poverty, and we know its obliga-

tions. Our rules hold us to the virtue of poverty or poverty of spirit; and, to know our duty and fulfil it, we must study our rules with deep attention, we must keep them with rigorous exactness, and grow every day in fondness for them.

Poverty is a wall round religion, and, aware of what disaster any opening in the wall means for a fortified city, we must display all the stout courage and vigilant care of soldiers appointed to defend the outer fortifications. The city stands only as long as its wall, the wall stands only as long as the stones in it hold together, and every infraction of poverty is a loosened stone or a hole in the wall, through which the enemy in time rushes, to do disastrous havoc. Whole religious orders have gone to smash because of laxity in this one matter; and individual religious, like Judas, have bartered their birthright for even less than thirty pieces of silver, and purchased for themselves damnation.

Poverty is a tender mother to everybody in the convent as well as to all the virtues, and very logically everybody in the convent ought to be a daughter to poverty, and do her the kindness daughters do their mother. Poverty is nothing if not poor; and by all laws of kind children ought to resemble their mother. A religious without the virtue and the spirit of poverty is rich, and out of place in the family. We know what it means to be poor, and we are counterfeit religious unless we put on the ways of the poor. The pain attaching to poverty is peculiar, reaching to the soul as well as to the body, hurting the heart through pride as well as the appetite through hunger; and the

poor are never an hour without its sting and bite. Either they have nothing they can call their own, or, when they have something of the kind, ordinary mortals would be ashamed to own it. They are ready always to beg, and they are sometimes driven by extreme dearth to actually choose between the humiliation and downright starvation.

They seldom quarrel about the quality of their food, their clothes are meant more for use than for ornament, and they sleep where sleep would flee any but bodies tired and exhausted by work. We religious forget our poverty, when we complain that the food is not cooked to our taste, when the cut or the quality of our clothes displeases us, when we waste time thinking about the furniture or want of furniture in our room. We ought to be on the alert for opportunities to taste the bitterness of poverty, particularly when privation threatens no harm to our health or our efficiency. We ought to be so busy with the main affair of life that not a minute is open to trifles like food, dress or lodging. We are not here to eat, or dress, or sleep. They are necessary evils, and the smaller the share of our attention they get the better. We are here to save our souls, to grow in holiness, to spread God's kingdom in our own hearts and in the hearts of others. We are in the convent to be poor in fact and poor in spirit, to cut loose from the multitudinous cares of wealth, monopolizing the time and the energies of brothers and sisters in the world.

Absolutely speaking, we can keep our vow of poverty without regarding the virtue of poverty as a wall

or a mother. Small holes, loose stones in the wall may well happen to be no serious breaches of the vow. But "Excelsior" is our motto, and our purpose must be not merely to avoid sin, but to increase our merit, and multiply the good pleasure of God. We profess to follow Christ, and our Leader went hungry. He depended for His meals on the uncertain charity of casual friends. He died naked on the cross, the seamless coat woven for Him by His Mother was a single item in the inventory of His wardrobe, and all three years of His public ministry He had not whereon to lay His head. Without detriment to the substance of our vow, we can, perhaps, on the score of health fuss a little about the quality of our meals; we can, perhaps, on the score of gentility cultivate a subdued kind of finery in dress; but we are degenerate children of our mother poverty, and we are incapacitating ourselves for the enthusiasm that makes saints. We have vowed poverty, we have voluntarily stripped ourselves of all worldly goods. Let us be honest with God, and honest with ourselves. Let there be no rapine in the holocaust, no weakening in our resolution; and let us whip out of our hearts every small desire for the comforts, the ease and the luxuries of life.

X

CHASTITY

"In the Resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the Angels of God in Heaven." St. Matthew, 22, 30.

IN a prior talk we were at some pains to set forth the excellences of poverty, and the advantages attaching to its observance. Our second vow deserves the same full measure of attention, and will get it in this present conference. Our vow of chastity means in substance the voluntary surrender of whatever pleasures of body are resident in marriage. Outside of marriage, everybody without a single exception is held to the strictest kind of virginity by the sixth and ninth commandments. These commandments forbid with hell for penalty every serious sin of impurity in thought, word or deed; and they bind all alike, married and single, people under vow and people without vow. Purity has claims on the married as well as on the single; and the impurities of married life are a greater abomination in the eyes of God than the impurities of the single. Marriage was instituted for the propagation of the race, not for the mere indulgence of pleasure. Its last purpose is children, and its pleasures are legitimate, only when enjoyed by husband and wife with a view to the procreation of children.

Its pleasures are a means, not an end; they are a reward employed by Providence to induce men and women to coöperate with Him in the growth and spread of the race, and its preservation from extinction; and they are alluring enough to entice the large majority of men and women to assume in return all the responsibilities, pains and cares attendant on the bearing, raising and education of children. St. Thomas is responsible for the remark that God or Nature always uses pleasure as a means to some higher good, never intending man or beast to rest in it as in last end or highest good. And he illustrates his thought with a lesson drawn from the use of food and the use of marriage. To live, we must eat; and, to induce us to eat, He gives us an appetite for food, and so makes the pleasure of eating contribute to our continuance in life. To escape extinction, new births, the fruits of marriage, must atone for the losses accruing to our race from the ravages of death; and so He makes the pleasures of marriage contribute to the continuance of the human race. Few would marry, fewer still would submit to the inconveniences and discomforts attaching to family cares, were they not enticed to do so by the pleasures of wedded life. Conjugal purity is an obligation with the married, and they are even more exposed to temptations against purity, and take greater risks than the single.

Concupiscence, or rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, is a penalty of original sin, and the Blessed Virgin alone escaped it. It bears heavily on every member of the race, whether single or married, and it

is only a little less annoying to the married than to the single. Adam and Eve felt its sting when they covered their nakedness with a girdle of leaves. St. Paul bears witness to its presence, when he talks of that sting of the flesh, that angel of Satan given to buffet him. II Cor. 12, 7. This concupiscence is sensitive appetite for pleasures of the flesh, and it is quite natural to man and woman. It is as much part and parcel of their nature as reason. It had place in Adam and Eve before the fall as well as after the fall, with this single difference, that before the fall it was entirely subject to reason, and never urged its owner to the commission of sin; after the fall it was in rebellion against reason, and incessantly prompted its owner to the enjoyment of forbidden delights. Before the fall, it prompted Adam and Eve to marry and enjoy the pleasures of marriage; since the fall, it prompts their children to do, when single and unmarried, deeds of shame, that are entirely honorable in the case of the married. In the event of no original sin, the condition we call primitive innocence would have continued forever. Sensitive appetite would be no enemy to reason, sins of impurity would be bare possibilities, and a life of chastity would have been comparatively easy, hardly more deserving of reward than life in marriage.

And this would seem to be the chiefest merit, the chiefest excellence of our vow of chastity. It purposes restoring to men and women the primitive innocence they forfeited in the fall of their first parents. It tends to renew those happier times, when sensitive ap-

petite listened to the rulings of reason, and never moved for rebellion against the law of God. More than this, it lays on the altar of God's love altogether legitimate desires, that even in the state of primitive innocence would have stirred in human hearts, to find full and complete satisfaction in marriage. Our vow of chastity accomplishes this blessed result by killing in the soul all desire for carnal pleasure, making marriage a moral impossibility, and so putting every indulgence of the kind in thought, word or deed beyond our reach. All the heroism of this mode of life lies in the circumstance that men and women, after the fall and its consequent curse of disordered concupiscences, essay living as Adam and Eve lived before the fall, when concupiscence was reason's most obedient servant, and not its deadliest enemy. Chastity, therefore, attempts to reëstablish the order of primitive innocence, and restore men and women to their pristine dignity, subjugating animal instincts to the supremacy of reason by a bonded promise to abstain altogether from legitimate as well as illegitimate pleasures of the flesh. When true in every particular to their vow of chastity, religious in the convent or monastery are living a life, in this one respect at least, like the life lived by Adam and Eve in Eden before the fall. They are hitting close to the manner of life God originally planned for His children, before His plans were interfered with by the disobedience of our first parents. And every approach to God's original purposes is a distinct improvement on present conditions, and a decided gain for human nature.

Chastity makes men and women angels; and this statement of the Lord Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel is responsible for the thought. "In the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married; but shall be as the angels of God in Heaven." St. Matthew, 22, 30. Bodies make the great difference between men and angels. We have bodies, they have none. Concupiscence or sensitive appetite is rooted in the body; no body means no concupiscence, and angels are free from all annoyance on this score. They enjoy by very nature a peace and a comfort the religious of God must make their own by persistent effort, abundantly helped by the grace of God. Religious, while condemned to close companionship with bodies, must live as if they had none, and continually refuse ear to a most urgent beggar. In a comparison between the chastity of angels and the chastity of men, St. John Chrysostom awards the palm to that of men. Chastity in angels is of a higher order, admitting no possibility of stain or blemish. Chastity in men is harder, and God as well as man measures love by the pain, and labor, and difficulty accompanying its manifestation. We must strive to imitate angelical purity in cleanness of both body and mind. Even before the fall, while yet their period of probation lasted, angels could not be approached by grosser temptations of the flesh. And withal they were happy. Bodily delights contribute nothing to the comfort of spirits, and they are in no sense of the word essential to the true happiness of men or women. They touch only the generic element of our nature, the animal within us; they have

no bearing on the specific portion of our being, the angel within us, or reason. They are matter for merit, and their whole use is to afford us opportunity for self-denial and abstinence. They try men and women, and make them more perfect; and the preacher in Ecclesiasticus must have had them in mind when he wrote, "Who hath been tried and made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting: He that could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things, and hath not done them." Ecclesiasticus, 31, 10.

These bodily delights are a large factor in the well-being of beasts, and their absence leaves a legitimate craving unfilled, a craving that cannot be otherwise satisfied, because they are all body and no spirit. Men and women are part spirit and part animal, and the angel within them was meant by their Creator to keep every lower appetite in tight control. Without this wise precaution we should be as much at the mercy of passion and the promptings of luxury as unreasoning animals. Apart from God's grace, the secret of chastity lies in developing the spiritual side of our being, and the process has enabled pagan philosophers to rise superior to unworthy inclinations, and lead clean lives. Though we invite defeat, if we go into the struggle without large reliance on the grace of God, we can add to our forces by borrowing from the wisdom of these sages. Grace builds on nature, and purity exerts a lesser strain on men and women surrendered to intellectual pursuits, and enamoured of study. When mind and spirit are busy with their own proper object, their ears are deaf to clamor of the

senses, they experience a delight able to induce forgetfulness of grosser needs; and, by a species of elimination, angel-thoughts become the heart's single desire, the one agreeable source of recreation for mental energy. It is a fatal mistake to develop the body at the expense of the spirit; and the open road to success is subjection of the flesh by means of mortification and chastisement. We cannot give the lion's share of our attention to things spiritual, and at the same time slave to so material a pursuit as that of bodily pleasure; and custom can with smooth ease harden us to self-denial in one department of delight, when some more alluring prospect of enjoyment is ready at our command. We can by dint of exercise contrive to forget the body and its base suggestions by crowding our memory with thought of the soul and of the pleasures it can without blame covet.

Chastity in men and women makes them from one point of view more than angels, and truer images of God than the angels themselves. God is a spirit, and this quality He receives from nothing and nobody outside Himself. His quality of spirit is no gift made Him by another, and chastity in God is the work of His own endeavor. Angels are spirits in virtue of a gift forced on them by God. Chastity in them is due to no good-will or effort on their part. They have no bodies, and simply must be chaste, whether they will or no. But chastity in man or woman is in large measure due to personal endeavor and strenuous generosity. Men and women have bodies, lapses from purity are quite possible, and every victory they win

over the flesh is due to their own energy, seconded, of course, by the abundant grace of God. Therefore, in this matter of chastity, pure men and pure women surpass the angels themselves, and rank right next to Almighty God. This other consideration can help elucidate the superior excellence of chastity, as compared with poverty and obedience. In point of generosity chastity easily excels the other two vows. Generosity is always measured by the magnitude of the sacrifice it entails; and, say what you will, pleasures of body are closer to the man and more appealing than wealth or pleasures of soul like honor, pride and ambition. Wealth is an external good, and cannot compare with pleasures of body or pleasures of soul. Pleasures of soul are indeed internal goods, and in this respect on a level with pleasures of body; but they appeal to the spiritual side of our nature, and, in this present life, in this prison-house of sin where things material rule, our bodies are more clamorous for gratifications than our souls. Things ought to be otherwise, they would, perhaps, be otherwise in different surroundings; but we must take things as we find them, and beyond doubt honor is less substantial and less satisfying than meat, and drink, and bodily delights. We are half animal and half angel; and in this present life the animal has his day, the angel within us will have his day in the life awaiting us beyond the grave.

Poverty of spirit is an obligation for everybody, obedience to superiors imposed by nature is an obligation on everybody; and the vows of poverty and obedience have nothing to do with either obligation. Ab-

stinence from bodily pleasure is an obligation on the single only, it has no place in marriage; and the vow of chastity has everything to do with it in the case of religious, who voluntarily surrender the privileges of marriage. The vow of poverty adds actual poverty to poverty of spirit; a vow of obedience, to the detriment of pride and ambition, adds submission to superiors other than those imposed by nature; but the vow of chastity makes marriage and its pleasures impossible, rendering otherwise legitimate emotions of concupiscence sinful. God has no praise for actual wealth, "Wo to you rich," St. Luke, 6, 24; He set a curse on pride, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth His grace to the humble." St. James, 4, 6. But marriage He made a Sacrament. He was one at the wedding-feast in Cana, and illustrious saints were married. Marriage is a virtuous condition, and never deserved the reproaches wealth and pride of self-will got at the hands of Christ.

Leaving now the excellence of chastity, its chiefest advantage is summed up by St. Paul in the one word, opportunity to serve or attend upon the Lord without impediment. "She that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband. The unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. I Cor. 7, 34. To understand St. Paul, and thoroughly appreciate the wisdom of his advice, one need only recall some few of the thousand cares besetting husband and wife.

There are the multitudinous cares of a family, often

able to drive husband and wife to the verge of despair. Even when peace reigns supreme at home, when everything is in ideal condition, husband has to please wife, wife has to please husband; children have to be fed, clothed and educated; daughters have to be placed, sons have to be married, servants have to be guarded. And life is a dubious blessing, when things go wrong at home, when things are not up to the standard; when the wife is a quarrelsome scold, when the husband is a brute or a drunkard, when children are ungrateful and disobedient, when relatives are meddlers and fomenters of dissension. And all the while your religious in virtue of his vow is a citizen of Heaven, at leisure for God and the things of God, with no care but salvation, with no task but personal holiness and growth in perfection.

XI

OBEDIENCE

“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death; for which cause God also hath exalted Him.” Philippians, 2, 8.

ONE way or another all morality is included in the Ten Commandments of God. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and morality or holiness is love of God. Our three vows would seem to be practical helps suggested by God Himself for the full observance of His commandments. Thus, poverty in particular secures the seventh and tenth against all danger of harm. They forbid deeds of theft and covetous thoughts; and the religious, who voluntarily surrenders all rights to ownership actual and prospective, cannot in reason steal or covet another's goods. Chastity safeguards the sixth and ninth commandments. They forbid all enjoyment of bodily pleasure outside of marriage, and the religious, who voluntarily surrenders the right to such pleasure inherent in marriage, cannot in reason have anything to do with impurity in thought, word or deed. Obedience secures the fourth commandment against danger of violation. This commandment prescribes submission to parents and such other superiors as are appointed by nature; and the religious, who voluntarily adds to this prescription of nature a solemn promise to obey men and

women with no natural claim to the homage, is in small danger of running counter to the wishes of duly constituted authority. Unkind deeds are forbidden by the fifth commandment, unkind words by the eighth; and the cloistered life we lead in religion cuts down the number and grievousness of such sins by keeping their occasions within narrow limits. Besides, everything in religion urges us to be kind in deed and kind in word to our neighbors. We live with souls solemnly pledged to give nobody offense, and conspicuous for virtue beyond the touch and reach of suspicion. The first, second and third commandments prescribing worship of God, reverence for His Holy Name, and observance of the Sabbath, are eminently safe in the cloister and convent, where consecration to God's service is life's sustaining air, where the sweet name of Jesus is forever in the heart and on the lips, where every day is Sunday because of morning Mass and because of the royal dignity all our work assumes in consequence of its dedication to the Master with the help of a pure intention. There are no slaves in religion, and servile work without slaves is an impossibility as well as a misconception. We cannot keep our vows, we cannot live loyal to the spirit of our vocation, without observing in the exactest way conceivable all the ten commandments of God.

Our vow of obedience naturally suggests thought of the fourth commandment, ordering children to honor their father and mother. We already remarked that religious obedience surpasses in heroism the obedience children pay their parents. God or nature has im-

planted in young hearts an instinctive leaning towards obedience to their parents, and grace encounters small difficulty when it urges well-born children to love, honor and obey their parents. Boys and girls are fond enough of father and mother till passion awakes in their bosoms, till selfishness declares war against duty. And all because the child's absolute dependence on father and mother for life, support, happiness and education awakens in the young soul overpowering emotions of admiration, gratitude and fondness. Nature thus paves the way for the transformation to be effected by grace in a child's affection for his parents. Filial affection is not altogether what it ought to be, till children reverence and respect father and mother as living representatives of God, giving them next place to God in their thoughts. And this act of faith, whereby the child in a manner identifies the parent with God, offers small or no difficulty to the child's mind, because parents in a marked way assume towards their children the vast prerogatives of God as maker, preserver, provider and Saviour. They give their children being, keep them in life, provide for all their wants, and defend them against danger. And it often occurs to me to think that we religious could with profit animate ourselves to obedience by viewing our superiors as children view their parents. Our superiors are appointed by God to discharge in our regard the very same functions parents are commissioned to discharge towards their children. They make us religious when they sit solemnly to receive our vows; they keep us in the convent by patience and forbearance with our

whims, and weaknesses, and disappointing failures; they are busy from early morning till late at night providing for our wants of body and soul; and they are all zeal to shield us from surrounding temptations and dangers by motherly advice and insistence on regular observance. It ought to be as easy for a religious to see God in her superior as it is for a boy or girl to see God in a parent. And obedience is going to be always imperfect till we see God in superiors. Faith must be our anchor, and obedience tied to faith can ride in safety whatever storm. All the heroism of faith lies in the difficulty reason experiences in the full and honest acknowledgment of a hidden God, and God hiding in authority is not the hardest thing in the world to see. The faith of the penitent thief on the cross was equal to the harder task of discovering God in the garb of a criminal, exposed in death to the insults of His people. Nothing in the whole scene, nothing save pain without parallel, degradation beyond compare; and yet the man pierced all disguises, and discovered God where everything proclaimed the weakness and wretchedness native to God's most abandoned creature.

To obey men and women in their own individual capacity is slavery; and slavery is a galling yoke, because of our birthright of freedom and equality. To obey God in man or woman is the inheritance of the free, and the process robs religious obedience of all suspicion of shame. In religion we are not mere workmen hired to do service to employers wealthier or wiser than ourselves. We are the sons and daughters of God, ready to do the wishes of our Father in Heaven,

as manifested to us by His representatives on earth. No man or woman, apart from authority vested in him or her by Almighty God, has a right to my obedience; and any man or woman clothed with this authority by virtue of office has exactly the same right to my submission and allegiance as God Himself. It is all one whether the king commands his subjects personally, or by letter, or by some duly accredited representative; and whether God addresses us by word of mouth, or in the pages of Scripture, or by the voice of a superior; our duty is the same, and obedience in all three cases is a most solemn obligation. God is not in the habit of personally communicating with His servants, Scripture is sparing of details and on occasions obscure, but the prescriptions of obedience admit of absolutely no doubt or dispute, and descend to most trifling particulars in the day's round of duties. Obedience fixes the hour to rise in the morning, the hour to retire at night; the time we are to pray, and the time we are to work; when and where we are to talk, when and where we are to be silent. In fact no single detail in the life of an individual religious escapes the vigilance of obedience; and a superior is talking all day long to everybody in the convent in the printed pages of her book of rules. Thanks to obedience, we religious are never at a loss to know what God wants; and the surpassing favor is matter for eternities of thanksgiving, the basis and foundation of whatever peace and contentment life in religion tastes and knows. Hence the supreme need of seeing God in superiors, hence the supreme need of detecting in their voice whispers from the lips of

Christ Himself. Viewed in this light, obedience even of judgment is easy; and this mental transformation of God into His representative is less a miracle or mystery than the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. As in matters of faith, so in matters of obedience, we must bend all the forces of our mind and will to recognize God in superiors and reverence divinity in their orders. Of course, this species of faith professed in religion has the disadvantage of smaller cogency than supernatural faith, based on the immediate word of God. And yet motives for credibility are not wanting. We readily enough understand that the saying, "Who heareth you, heareth me," St. Luke, 10, 16, was addressed to rulers in the Church, not to rulers in religion; but without danger of mistake we can reckon it applicable as well to civil authority and religious superiors. All authority is from God, and from the very nature of things government in religion is largely theocratic. Viewed in this light, departures from obedience wear a serious aspect, and loyalty to superiors loses every semblance of doubt and discomfort. Viewed otherwise, obedience is set with thorns, because it demands sacrifices unknown to the other obligations of religion. In the words of Pope John XXII, "Poverty is a great good, chastity is a greater; but greatest of all is obedience. Poverty curbs greed; chastity, pleasure; obedience, mind and will." A sacrifice gathers dignity from the victim slain; and man knows no more precious possession than these two powers of his soul, mind and will.

We are looking for incentives to growth in fondness

for this divine virtue of obedience, and these few reflections may prove a help. Small need to recall the high favor it enjoyed in the esteem of Christ. His whole life is one long and instructive sermon on the beauty and dignity of this virtue. At Nazareth He was obedient to saints like Mary and Joseph. In Jerusalem and on Calvary He was obedient to monsters of wickedness like Herod, Pilate, the Scribes and the Pharisees seated on the chair of Moses. His meat was to do the will of His Father. St. John, 4, 34. He lived on obedience much as we live on food, and the spiritual life knows no fitter or healthier nourishment. Every act of obedience is a new meal for the soul, and in the kingdom of God death from hunger is a very remote danger, when obedience flourishes. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death; for which cause God also hath exalted Him." St. Paul in these words ascribes to obedience all the glory of the Lord Christ, seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven; and the same virtue can win for us the same renown, the same surpassing reward.

Heaven is the reward of holiness, holiness is a heaped up measure of virtue; and in the language of St. Gregory obedience is the queen-mother of all the virtues, planting them in the soul and preserving them when they are once planted. Holiness is union of mind and heart with God in every detail of life, and obedience means to think and wish with the mind and will of God made manifest to us by the messages of His representatives, our superiors. In the realm of merit and

virtue obedience is your true philosopher's stone, turning everything it touches into purest gold. It makes our most indifferent acts good, it makes our good acts better. Eating and sleeping when combined with obedience become positive virtues, and cease to be mere animal acts with no bearing on Heaven. Prayer with obedience is better than prayer without it, and climbs faster to Heaven. Obedience invests with a golden glow every deed it touches, and increases merit a hundred-fold. It robs life of uncertainty and points a straight road to Heaven. Obedience is a greater sacrifice than poverty or chastity, because it surrenders goods of soul like mind and will, while poverty and chastity surrender only external goods like money, and goods of body like the pleasures of marriage. God measures our love for Him by the trouble it costs us, and in what measure we love, in that measure shall we be rewarded. Great then must be the reward attaching to obedience. It begins here, to finish in Heaven; and the thought is responsible for these sounding praises of obedience left us by Climacus, "Obedience is a life unburdened of cares, a voyage without danger of loss, a journey made while we sleep. It enables us to lay our burdens on the shoulders of another, and to cross the wide sea of trouble in a strong swimmer's arms."

XII

SOLID VIRTUE

"A wise man that built his house upon a rock." St. Matthew, 7, 24.

SOLID virtue is the kind that counts for happiness here and happiness hereafter. Till holiness becomes a habit it is too uncertain a possession to base happiness of whatever sort. Of course intermittent virtue helps some, but it means no great joy for its owner till it grows to solid. Solid virtue wears like a rock. Time and use, far from impairing its strength, add new forces to its primal vigor. Opportunities, no matter how multiplied, find it always ready and equal to the effort. Difficulties are but fuel for the fire, and it picks up speed as it goes—*crescit eundo*. Stout adherence to principle is a wonderful help to growth in holiness as well as to success in life. Horace has immortalized the quality in three golden lines, *Justum et tenacem propositi virum—Si fractus illabatur orbis—Impavidum ferient ruinæ*. If the earth fell in ruins at his feet, the man of principle would present a bold front to the crash. This strict adherence to principle consists altogether in mapping out a line of conduct based on motives that are sound and true, and keeping the road undaunted, whatever happens. Right principles never change, and on this account men of

principle live uniform lives. Our whims and tastes vary with the hour, and on this account the imperfect, slaves to intermittent virtue, because they lean on whim and taste for inspiration, lead checkered, broken and spotted careers. Intermittent virtue, the unlovely possession of the imperfect, is as uncertain, weak and shifting as water. It cannot carry its owner over a single whole day without blame, and it does him the additional unkindness of provoking him to disgust and despair. The soul condemned by her own folly to unlovely companionship with intermittent virtue must be an object of pity to the angels. She is more of a disappointment to herself than she is to superiors and friends interested in her welfare. The tepid soul feels all the weight of her misery. Likes and dislikes fill in her regard the functions usurped by principle in men of sturdy character.

The outstanding feature of solid virtue is continuity in good, good without break or interruption; and what strikes me most of all in the life of Christ is the continuity of His holiness, His perseverance along right lines; that quality in virtue of which we experience no surprise or wonder, when He acquits Himself of patience, or forgiveness, or kindness. When in the gospel narrative we come on the exordium to some important scene in the Master's life, we instinctively, naturally, expect no slip, no mistake, but another manifestation of consummate sanctity. We can at least take this lesson home to ourselves, this universal trait pervading and coloring all the incidents in Christ's divine life; and experience can convince us

that the secret of true and real holiness is wrapped up somewhere in the lesson, and that solid virtue is key to the Kingdom of Heaven. The humiliating characteristics of intermittent virtue are painfully conspicuous in our own stumbling careers. We are good by fits and starts. Today we entertain angels; tomorrow, demons. We walk the ways of the imperfect, and we know it, and we feel all the weight of our misery. Sometimes in the quiet of meditation the thought comes to us that we are in some mysterious way incapacitated for sanctity, that God walled us out of Paradise, and turned us down a side-path, and never meant us to keep company with His nearer friends. But that is a temptation, that is a lie hot from hell. We are as capable of exalted sanctity as any citizen in Heaven; and to crawl out of the difficulty by alleging any such excuse is to add cowardice to treason, it is to insult the majesty of God.

Virtue is holiness, holiness is a house; and solid virtue is a solid house, built on a solid foundation, built according to plans conducive to solidity, and made of solid material. And the Spiritual Exercises of our holy father, St. Ignatius, furnish us with all needed requisites. The mind of man knows no more solid foundation than the principle put at the head of the Exercises; we are here to praise, worship and serve God, and so save our soul. A house of holiness built on this principle for foundation is a house built on a rock, and the winds and waves of adversity and temptation cannot hurt or harm it. Other principles in current use as foundations are sand, and houses

built on them go down in ruins under the first puff of wind. These other principles actuate worldlings, and they assume guises like the following. "Get money, by honest methods if you can; but get money. Live till you die, and gather the roses while you may. Better the cemetery than the shades of obscurity, and humility is the badge of little minds." Our principle is so universal that everybody can build on it. These other principles are particular; and their realization, while possible for some, is quite impossible for others; and the others will always be the large majority. Our principle is so philosophical that it grips the most unsophisticated mind. Other principles are false, because opposed to the goodness and wisdom of God. Our principle is so practical that it is applicable to every condition in life. Other principles are empty theories, because they are built on the stupid hypothesis that man's whole destiny is in this life, with no life beyond. While it would be the height of absurdity to urge some to accumulate large fortunes, or revel in worldly pleasure or ambition, fame and glory, it is quite within reason to urge everybody to praise, worship and serve God. This triple homage is virtue or holiness; and, while any neighbor can with a motion of his hand block another's way to wealth, and pleasure, and honor, no neighbor can effectively keep us from becoming saints. These other goods of life are too dependent on the good will of neighbors to be entirely within our own power, holiness is peculiarly our own work and quite beyond being hindered or prevented by the malice or indifference of others. Our principle is

all philosophy. It flows as a corollary from the very existence of God and His ownership of things. He made us soul and body, to the maker belongs what he makes ; and praise is activity of the mind, worship is activity of the will, service is activity of the body energized by the will under the direction of the mind. Immortality is no empty theory, it is a most solid certainty ; and immortality counsels us to secure for soul and body a place of happiness and an overflowing abundance of joy and comfort throughout the endless ages of eternity.

With the foundation down, and the exercises of the First Week most effectively accomplish this section of the work, the superstructure with its plans and its material demands our next attention. This superstructure is the work of the other three weeks ; and the solidity and thoroughness, everywhere manifest in the First Week, are no less conspicuous in them. Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Everywhere in the three weeks the Lord is model. Everywhere in the three weeks imitation of the Master is the feature insisted on ; in the Second Week, imitation with a view to knowledge ; in the Third Week, imitation with a view to courage ; in the Fourth Week, imitation with a view to union, the consummation of holiness. He proclaims Himself the truth, the way and the life ; our teacher, our model, our stay and support in the struggle.

Knowledge of what we are to do, courage to try, and how to do it, these are our three great needs ; and they are abundantly provided for in the three last weeks of

the Exercises, the week of light, the week of strength, the week of union. To journey through life without blame we must have a teacher, whose heavenly and unerring wisdom can serve for sure and safe guide. Jesus the truth is this teacher; and in the gospels He furnishes us with documents and directions couched in the clear and simple language of God, with a bearing on every one of the virtues peculiar to whatever age, state or condition in life. Nor was this enough. Heaven is won at the expense of hard work and violent effort, and we are all big and little cowards when face to face with hard work and violent effort. To encourage us to march ahead in spite of failure, and hurts and sorrows, Jesus the way had to take the road and walk in front, to show us cowards that humility is possible, that purity is possible, that obedience, patience, all the virtues are possible. And nothing so encourages a person to persevere in the midst of difficulties as the example of a brave leader. And Jesus was teacher, preacher and leader of the right kind. He never taught a single thing without first practicing what He taught. He wants us to do only what He first did Himself. He is in front, we need only follow. Nay, more; from fear that in spite of encouragement we should still prove weak and sink down on the march, He purchased for us by His death on the cross a measure of grace abundantly able to carry us through every danger, past every temptation up to the throne of God. Jesus, therefore, is the truth, the way and the life. Eventually to reach Heaven we have but to learn the lessons of virtue He taught, imitate the example of His

holy life and use the grace He puts at our disposal.

While courage would seem to be the outstanding feature of the Third Week, the Week of the Passion, instruction or enlightenment disputes place with it for prominence. The Passion of Christ is a hidden treasury of strength and courage, and, when other motives fail us, Christ in pain can hold us to our duty. And we need the help. The larger half of holiness consists in shouldering our cross and painfully trudging along in the gory footsteps of our Captain Christ. We cannot carry the heavy burden of Christ's cross without a large measure of Christ's stout strength. And absorbing meditation on the Passion is the one ready way to invest souls with the hardness of iron and the hardihood of martyrdom. Every individual incident in the sad story is a long sermon, full to overflowing of sober and vitally important truths, food for hours of pleasant and profitable meditation. Any corner of the Passion taken at random can suggest to the devout mind golden maxims of conduct, points of departure for reform and improvement. In the garden He is our model for patient prayer and the endurance of aches attendant on broken friendship. His perseverance in face of the Father's refusal to remove the chalice, is solemn reminder of our duty towards prayer when Heaven seems deaf. His submissive obedience with heroic resignation mixed, counsels stout courage in the valley of desolation. The betrayal by Judas, the unkindness of the sleeping disciples, teach us what to expect when we lean on mere men for comfort and consolation. The nails in His hands and feet are un-

holy pleasure, and it ought to hurt us as much as it hurts Christ. The crown that dabbled His hair with blood, the reed that beat pain into His temples are a reproach to tyrants in and out of religion, a melancholy warning to greed of honor. His crucifixion is a pathetic picture of the last sad chapter in many a man's history, when obedience drives him like a willing slave to the hill of skulls, and hangs him on a cross, to close in the eyes of the world a life of disappointment with a death of ignominy and shame. And so we could run through all the cruel stages of the Passion, refreshing our tired hearts with sweet comparisons, and deriving from every wound and blood-drop the medicine needed to cure our hurts, and lovingly dispensed by this divine physician and healer of souls.

Looking back, the foundation on which we build is solid, because it is the principle about our destiny set at the head of the Exercises; our plans are conducive to solidity, because we build according to the pattern that was shown us on the Mount, the Lord Jesus as He lived and moved among men. The one remaining requisite for solid virtue is the employment of sound and solid material in the construction of our house, and our separate acts constitute this material. Every man's life is a succession of good and evil deeds. Like straw and stubble, the evil that men do goes up in flames and smoke; the good is not interred with their bones, but climbs skyward to live as long as God.

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